

ANTONIO MERCURIO

HYPOTHESES ON ULYSSES

A new look at Homer's Odyssey

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Translated from Italian by Martha S. Bache-Wiig 2009, authorized by the Author.

ANTONIO MERCURIO

HYPOTHESES ON ULYSSES

This book presents a new way of interpreting the Odyssey that is ingenious, beautiful and elegant. It is an interpretation based on the theory of Cosmo-Art, which unites heaven and earth, life and death, men and women, pain and wisdom; and it reveals the profound meaning of Homer's ideas on how to reach immortality through the creation of secondary beauty, which is the result of a fusion of cosmic and human forces.

The Odyssey is the greatest love story that has ever been told in the history of world literature. It is based not on *love and death* (like the love between Romeo and Juliette, or between Paolo and Francesca), but on *love and immortal beauty*; a type of love that can win over death forever, and a type of beauty that is created only when a man and a woman manage to produce *glorious concordance*, after much suffering and after developing a great willingness to be daring.

Notes from the translator:

- The passages from the Odyssey that the author used are from the renowned translation from Greek to Italian done by Rosa Calzecchi Onesti, Published by Einaudi. I have translated these passages, instead of utilizing a renowned translation from Greek to English, because there seems to be no translation from Greek into English of the concept of “*glorious concordance*”, as found in Calzecchi Onesti’s work, which is an essential theme in the Author’s work.
- In this text, several titles of the author’s books are mentioned. Some are already available English, and their titles are only in English. Some are in the process of being translated, and their titles are also in English. Some are available as of this time only in Italian: these titles have been translated into English and placed in brackets {}. A list of all the authors books with a specification of which already are or soon will be available in English, is found at the end of the book.

To all those who want to possess their own lives instead of being possessed by others, so they can follow the sense of cosmic purpose that guides them and transform their lives into immortal beauty.

Table of Contents

<i>Notes from the translator:</i>	4
INTRODUCTION	11
CHAPTER I:	
BEYOND THE SIEGE AND THE RETURN, OR THE ROAD TO IMMORTALITY	
ACCORDING TO ULYSSES	15
CHAPTER II:	
DISCOURSE ON BEAUTY	18
CHAPTER III:	
VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE BEAUTY	22
CHAPTER IV:	
TELEMACHUS AND ULYSSES	30
CHAPTER V:	
FROM THE MATERNAL TO THE PATERNAL AND FROM THE EARTH TO THE	
COSMOS	33
CHAPTER VI:	
THE SYNTHESIS OF OPPOSITES, BEAUTY AND IMMORTALITY	37
CHAPTER VII:	
AN OUTLINE OF ONE POSSIBLE VIEW OF THE ODYSSEY AS AN ALCHEMICAL	
PROCESS WITH A COSMIC PURPOSE	39
CHAPTER VIII:	
ULYSSES ACCEPTS ZEUS' REQUEST TO CREATE NEW BEAUTY BY EXTRACTING IT	
FROM WISDOM, PAIN AND ART	44

CHAPTER IX:

THE FIRST ULYSSES AND THE SECOND ULYSSES	46
--	----

CHAPTER X:

THE PACT TO CREATE BEAUTY	48
---------------------------------	----

CHAPTER XI:

THE BEAUTY OF LIFE	52
--------------------------	----

CHAPTER XII:

THE PERSONAL SELF AND THE COSMIC SELF	54
---	----

CHAPTER XIII:

THE INTERNAL MONSTERS	57
-----------------------------	----

CHAPTER XIV:

THE LABYRINTH OF THE DEVOURING MOTHER	60
---	----

CHAPTER XV:

REPPRESSED HATRED, AN UNEXPLORED REALITY	63
--	----

CHAPTER XVI:

CIRCE, CALYPSO AND IMMORTALITY	71
--------------------------------------	----

CHAPTER XVII:

THE SIRENS AND INTRAUTERINE INCEST	74
--	----

CHAPTER XVIII:

ULYSSES AND THE IMPACT WITH SCYLLA	78
--	----

CHAPTER XIX:

ULYSSES AS A TEACHER OF LIFE AND OF WISDOM	80
--	----

CHAPTER XX:

THE STRUCTURE OF THE <i>GLOBAL I</i>	83
--	----

CHAPTER XXI:

THE FIVE POISONS ACCORDING TO BUDDHA AND ACCORDING TO HOMER88

CHAPTER XXII:

WHY DOES HOMER CHOOSE ULYSSES?.....97

CHAPTER XXIII:

THE PRAYER OF THE ULYSSEANS..... 108

CHAPTER XXIV:

REFLECTIONS ON HADES 131

CHAPTER XXV:

THE *HYBRIS* OF ULYSSES 135

CHAPTER XXVI:

THE OX-SKIN OF WINDS AND THE POISON OF ENVY 146

CHAPTER XXVII:

A CLOSER LOOK AT ENVY 150

CHAPTER XXVIII:

THE SUN GOD'S CATTLE AND ULYSSES' GREED 157

CHAPTER XXIX:

MORE ABOUT ENVY 160

CHAPTER XXX:

GREED AND ENVY..... 163

CHAPTER XXXI:

GREED AS THE CAUSE OF HUMANITY'S SUFFERING 168

CHAPTER XXXII:

THE PAIN OF OUR TRIALS 170

CHAPTER XXXIII:	
THE ISLAND OF THE PHAEACIANS.....	175
CHAPTER XXXIV:	
WHO ARE THE PHAEACIANS, ANYWAY?	183
CHAPTER XXXV:	
ULYSSES, FROM POWERLESSNESS TO HUMILITY THAT IS THE OPPOSITE OF HYBRIS.	186
CHAPTER XXXVI:	
FROM POWERLESSNESS TO VIRILE PERSONAL POWER BEFORE THE DEVOURING MOTHER	191
CHAPTER XXXVII:	
THE SUITORS	193
CHAPTER XXXVIII:	
THE SUITORS AND THE POISON OF ARROGANT DEMANDS	203
CHAPTER XXXIX:	
FROM VIOLENCE TO NON-VIOLENCE	211
CHAPTER XL:	
ULYSSES AND PENELOPE	214
CHAPTER XLI:	
<i>CONCORDANCE</i> AND IMMORTALITY	221
CHAPTER XLII:	
MORE ON THE STORY OF THE ODYSSEY THAT ULYSSES TELLS PENELOPE	225
CHAPTER XLIII:	
COMPLICITY AND ARROGANT DEMANDS	227

CHAPTER XLIV:	
ULYSSES AND POSEIDON.....	230
CHAPTER XLV:	
CHARYBDIS AND THE FIG AS THE WORLD’S AXIS.....	240
CHAPTER XLVI:	
THERE ONCE WAS A MAN WHO WANTED TO FLY.....	247
CHAPTER XLVII:	
ALCHEMY AND COSMO-ART.....	251
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	253
OTHER BOOKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR	256

INTRODUCTION

I am deeply convinced that Homer composed the *Odyssey* to tell his contemporaries, as well as those from future generations, that the gods are not immortal divinities. Rather, they are only symbolic representations of cosmic and human spiritual forces, and the meaning of a human life lies in the ability to unite these forces and create immortal beauty for the individual and for the entire Universe. He came to this conclusion centuries before the pre-Socratic philosophers did. On reading the *Odyssey*, I formulated the following hypotheses on Ulysses and on the *Odyssey* that can help illuminate Homer's thought:

- a. This fusion of cosmic and human forces can create a truly immortal beauty, a beauty so great that the beauty of Aphrodite or Ares is only a pale shadow of it, worthy only of the derision of the gods.
- b. The meaning of life - the life of the cosmos and of human beings - is found in the creation of this supreme type of beauty, and not in the military glory expounded upon by Homer in the *Iliad*.
- c. Great courage is required to create this fusion between cosmic and human forces, courage even greater than that shown in military battle; much suffering must be faced and overcome, not as victims, but as artists capable of creating beauty that does not yet exist by extracting energy from pain, from guilt and from the continuous transformation of one's self.
- d. The struggles that Ulysses faces during his voyage home to Ithaca is a great metaphor that describes, in poetic form, the spiritual alchemical process that a man and a woman can undergo so as to meld into "*a single soul*". This can then create a type of immortal life that is immensely superior to the earthly life that we all have.
- e. It is not possible to create this type of superior and immortal life without operating on the earthly level where humans, not the gods, live.
- f. Not only human beings but also the entire cosmos wants immortality; the cosmos, however, even with all of its potent energies, can never create the immortality it longs for without the collaboration of men and women. Humanity would not long for immortality if the cosmos had not placed this aspiration within us.

The immortality that writers and poets attributed to the Olympian gods is a false immortality that does not hold up through the ravages of time. This is why Ulysses refuses to accept the

immortality that the sovereign goddesses Circe and Calypso offer him if he consents to marry them.

- g. Terrible, negative forces violently oppose the positive, spiritual cosmic and human forces. These negative forces create interminable obstacles within the process of fusing cosmic and human energies.
- h. The god Poseidon on one hand (the cosmic side), and the Suitors on the other (the human side), are powerful symbols that Homer uses to portray the dark negative forces.
- i. At the end, however, the Suitors are exterminated and Poseidon is forced to surrender before the positive forces that are at work. If we look closely, both Poseidon and the Suitors, although against their will, play a role that actually favors the positive forces. Both are necessary to reach the cosmic goal.
- j. The “sacred wedding” between the cosmos and humanity (represented by Ulysses and Penelope) most certainly will take place and from this union a new form of life will be created that is made up of true immortality and indestructible beauty.
- k. Whereas the Eleusinian Mysteries and the Orphic Mysteries – whose adepts also aimed at achieving immortality – have remained veiled in mystery and their secret rites died along with the death of their adepts, it will not be so for Ulysses’ path to immortality. This is because the instructions to follow it are found between the lines of Homer’s poem. One must only read the poem and meditate carefully on its meaning; these instructions can be understood by anyone and can be available to all who care to find them.
- l. Zeus, the father of the gods and of men, is the axis of the world. He has all the wisdom and intelligence necessary to guide the universe and humanity towards the goal of the creation of supreme beauty. Athena and Hermes are the gods who act as messengers between Zeus and humanity.
- m. This wisdom is available to all, even to those who are about to commit a crime (Aegisthus, for example). Each person is free to welcome it, by listening to one’s heart, or to refuse it, by closing themselves off from what they hear. If they refuse to listen, they will be the only ones responsible for the struggles that will befall them.

This is a world-view never proposed before, in either the East or the West. There is no god to offer either rewards or punishment, and no karmic entity forces anyone to pay for the wrongs they committed in a previous life. All are responsible for the life given to them, and

they must only decide whether to live as unhappy victims or as artists called to contribute to the life of the entire universe, by creating immortal beauty.

- n. The Odyssey is not an adventure tale but is a book of wisdom (every great culture has one). We all can use it to profoundly understand ourselves and to learn to create beauty and immortality, both our own and that of the entire universe.
- o. It is only partially true that Ulysses faces obstacles that Poseidon threw up against him during his return to Ithaca. The whole truth is that Zeus chose Ulysses to be submitted to continuous “trials”. Through these trials, he could strengthen his courage and his determination to reach the goal of the fusion of cosmic and human forces and the beauty this creates. He does this even when he must risk his life, if necessary.

The Bible is another book of wisdom, and it tells about a man named Job who underwent the most horrible suffering possible at the hand of his god, but we never know why this happened. The reason for this is surrounded by the mystery of a god who never revealed to patient Job why he had to undergo so much suffering. Why so much pain? We never know.

- p. Ulysses, the patient Ulysses, the man of many woes, as Homer often calls him, undergoes many trials. This is stated in the poem’s forward and is repeated in the second to last book, where it is also stated that Penelope, and not just Ulysses, has to face many trials as well. The reason behind these many trials is not a mystery; it is described in detail throughout whole Odyssey. One must only know how to read into between the lines and meditate upon what they find there. One must only compare one’s own life with Ulysses and Penelope’s lives, and the truth will emerge. Everything we go through today is mirrored in what Ulysses and Penelope went through, if not in exact detail, then at least in substance. They, however, listened closely to their internal wisdom and to cosmic wisdom, represented by Athena and by Zeus. Doubts and indecision often plagued them, but in the end they always chose the right course of action. This is why they have become immortal archetypes of men and women across the ages.
- q. Sex, Homer says, is nothing to feel guilty about if it does not cause violence for anyone. If, instead, one accepts to remain stuck in intrauterine incest and in a perverse enmeshment with the devouring and castrating mother, they are guilty. When one remains victim to repressed hatred, greed, envy, *hybris* and arrogance, suicidal and homicidal decisions and life lived based on arrogant

demands they are also guilty: these are all poisons that destroy one's own life and the life of others.

I formulated these hypotheses while I was living through painful life situations and while I was creating Cosmo-Art. During this time, I discovered the profound correspondence between the anthropological and cosmological vision of Cosmo-Art and the vision of Homer.

Cosmo-Art is an artistic movement, developed within the context of the Sophia University of Rome and its Institutes and Centers.

Those who would like to know more can read the books I have written on the subject: *The Ulysseans*, Published by the Sophia University of Rome, (S.U.R.) 2009, "*La nascita della Cosmo-Art*" {The Birth of Cosmo-Art} Published by the Sophia University of Rome, (S.U.R.) Rome, 2000, *Theorems and Axioms of Cosmo-Art*, Published by the Sophia University of Rome, (S.U.R.) 2009, "*Il mito di Ulisse e la bellezza seconda*" {The Myth of Ulysses and Secondary Beauty}, Published by the Sophia University of Rome, (S.U.R.) 2005, and "*I Laboratori Corali della Cosmo-Art*" {The Cosmo-Art Group Laboratories}, Published by the Sophia University of Rome, (S.U.R.) 2006,

I will speak of the above hypotheses and others as well in the course of this book, while following my own particular train of thought.

CHAPTER I

BEYOND THE SIEGE AND THE RETURN, OR THE ROAD TO IMMORTALITY ACCORDING TO ULYSSES

Franco Ferrucci, in his acute and eloquent paper entitled “Oltre l’assedio e il ritorno” {Beyond the siege and the returning}, found on pages 123-133 in the volume of the Acts of the Congress “*Ulisse: archeologia dell’uomo moderno*” {Ulysses: archeology of the modern man}, published by Bulzoni in 1998, says two interesting things.

The first is that Homer’s two poems contain all the development of western literature: the second is that, beyond the theme of the siege and the return, “*tertium non datur*” {there is no third possibility}. Between the perception of nothingness portrayed in the beginning, says Ferrucci, and the perception of nothingness in the end, man has no chance other than to plan a siege on life, or to console himself with the epic of the return to nothingness, after having experienced the siege.

I don’t believe that this is the second Homer’s thought, the one that composed the Odyssey.

Ferrucci did not reflect at all on the fact that Ulysses twice renounces immortality as promised him, first by Circe and the second time by Calypso.

Neither does he ask himself the reasons why Ulysses refuses this offer twice, with so much conviction.

As far as I know, no expert in mythology, Greek or World literature can find someone else who has turned something like this down.

So what does Ulysses’ decision mean? What lies behind it?

I think I have an answer to these questions and I want to offer an interpretation of the Odyssey that can explain my answer.

However, I want to ask the reader two fundamental questions.

The first is, when does the voyage of the light that departs from a star end? Can there be a return to the point of departure if the star that generated it has been dead for billions of years?

The second is when does a work of art’s voyage end?

Does it ever end, or is it a voyage that lasts forever?

Is there ever a return to the artist that created it, who has been dead for who knows how long?

Cyanobacteria, the first forms of life, fed themselves on light and with it, they created oxygen.

A work of art also feeds on light. But to create what?

Human beings also feed on light, not only so they can stay alive, but especially so they can create a life form that can travel from one universe to the next, into eternity.

I call this life form *Secondary Beauty* and it is a type of immortal beauty that once created never dies. It is a field of energy that is superior to any type of physical energy and only human beings can create it, if they desire to do so. It is an unknown energy field just as the soul of an art form is unknown; however, the soul of an art form exists and exerts and influence on us, and no one can deny this.

I would like to answer Ferrucci by saying that this, in my opinion, is the possible alternative to the *siege* and the *return*.

Clearly, the alternative that I propose comes neither from a scientific truth, nor from a religious one. It comes from a poetic-existential truth that I believe is contained in Homer's poem and coincides with the poetic vision of Cosmo-Art that I have created.

I believe that the elegance and the beauty of my alternative proposal can fascinate many readers that are trying to give meaning to their lives.

To create *primary beauty*, like a beautiful face, a beautiful view, the sky and many other forms of beauty, natural and human forces are sufficient.

Secondary beauty, instead, requires an immense energy that is the result of the fusion of human and cosmic forces.

It often happens that human beings must use their best energies to construct and maintain defensive or offensive systems, from the time of intrauterine life onward.

If they do not first free these energies from their investment in such mechanisms, they cannot use them to create *secondary beauty*.

For this reason, the individual must undertake a journey back into the abyss of his or her intrauterine experience.

This is what Ulysses does during his odyssey, so he can free up all that energy hitherto invested in defending himself from his internal monsters. Only afterwards can he fully use this energy to create immortal beauty.

While Dante identifies the cardinal sins as the negative forces that destroy people during their lives after they have left the womb, Homer sees them as operating on an intrauterine level, within the sea of amniotic fluid. He not only identifies the vices (the five poisons) but he also shows us our internal monsters and the trauma they produce, as well as the immense pain they cause us.

Ulysses does not undertake this journey alone. He has the constant presence of Athena (internal wisdom) by his side, and the loving presence of Zeus (cosmic wisdom)

is always in the background. There is also the presence of Hermes, which is decisive in at least two situations that human forces alone cannot solve.

There are also the chthonic forces and they Ulysses' trip to Hades represents them well.

There is also Poseidon's violence, which is necessary for smashing Ulysses' *hybris* into pieces, along with all of the arrogance that blinds him for so long and makes it impossible for him to be responsible for his own guilt.

Human guilt also contains precious energy. One must learn how to extract it, so it can be used to create *secondary beauty*.

After Ulysses returns to Ithaca, he leaves again to undertake a long journey, this time by both land and sea, as Teiresias had told him to do. He will stop only when he will have learned the difficult art of extracting beauty from guilt.

Ulysses must be willing to embrace all of these human and cosmic forces one step at a time, and he must learn to synthesize them continuously so he can transform his life.

The story of the Odyssey is not an epic poem about the valor of arms and military battle; it is the story of a man who learns to battle against himself so he can become an artist of his own life and of the life of the universe. No one else has ever told this story in the way Homer tells it.

CHAPTER II

DISCOURSE ON BEAUTY

*Man cannot live on bread alone
but on bread and beauty.*

By now, it is certain that beauty is the only sure connection between immortality and human beings, and there is no one who does not wish to become immortal in their innermost self.

Works of art that contain true beauty are immortal and those that do not contain it wind up in oblivion.

We all surround ourselves with beautiful things when we can, but this does not satisfy us as we wish it would.

The poor during past centuries were more careful; they created beautiful temples and cathedrals where everyone could go to enjoy the beauty and the majesty that were the fruits of their money and their labour.

Still today in Myanmar, thousands and thousands of gold leaves cover the cupolas of the temples and even the poorest families throughout the nation supply them.

Today's poor, instead, chase after comfort. For this, they are willing to indebt themselves up to their necks as well as to risk their lives, while undertaking endless migrations.

This too, perhaps, is a way of creating beauty and immortality, even though it is distorted. When, as so often happens, disillusionment and unhappiness arrive, people often realize that it is another type of beauty they are looking for, and not material comfort and wealth.

The kind of beauty that we are familiar with is present under various forms; we will here name three in particular, *primary beauty*, *secondary beauty* and the *beauty of life*.

Primary beauty is a fruit of nature and is always subject to death.

Secondary beauty is a fruit of humanity's artistic action and, once it is created, it is no longer subject to death nor to the law of entropy. It is immortal and it guarantees immortality to those who know how to create it.

It is immortal and it lives in the works of art that humanity has created and protects.

It is immortal and lives in the archetypes that reside in the collective unconscious of the human species.

It is immortal and lives in the cosmic consciousness that surrounds this planet and the whole universe, just as the aura that surrounds our bodies is visible in the Kirlian photographs.

It is immortal because it can leave this universe and travel from one universe to the next, forever.

Primary beauty is connected to form and to the relationship between matter and form. We can perceive this with our senses such as sight and hearing.

Secondary beauty is not necessarily connected to form. To the contrary, it transcends both form and external sense perception. It leads directly to the extremely particular energy field it is made of and that keeps it alive; this contact does not come about through the senses, but through the vibrations that emanate from the beauty itself, which those who learn how to perceive them can feel.

So far, only the great artists have been able to produce this beauty through their immortal works of art. With Cosmo-Art, which we will discuss in a bit, it can become available to all those who decide to develop their artistic self. This internal artist is within all human beings and it is what allows us to make continual syntheses of opposites and create new beauty.

This particular type of beauty signals a next step in the evolution of art, which to exist will no longer need a material support to remain alive. It will also no longer have to remain closed within the space-time borders of this universe.

There is, then, a third type of beauty, *the beauty of life, the beauty of living*. This, too, is a form of *primary beauty* that is found in nature. It can be lost and found again, but it cannot be purchased. The inner self can perceive it but the senses cannot. When it is missing, both the inner self and the body suffer from its absence.

When we feel that we have lost it and we want to find it again, we must be willing to take on a difficult task. This may come in the form of a spiritual path or an artistic spiritual path.

In any case, it always brings with it a profound transformation, but by itself, it does not guarantee immortality.

Psychoanalysis, as created by Freud, is essentially a search for knowledge of the unconscious and its drives, but knowledge of the unconscious does not automatically lead to a transformation. Therefore, it does not necessarily lead to well-being, or to beauty.

Sophia-Analysis, combined with Sophia-Art and Cosmo-Art, disciplines I created and have been developing since 1970 and that enrich and complete each other, is a path of *knowledge* and of *wisdom*, which leads to the transformation of oneself. This

transformation serves to create beauty. Its goal is thus the search for beauty and not the search for knowledge as an end unto itself.*

Sophia-analysis explores the *existential unconscious* from the intrauterine period up until adolescence, because that is where our greatest traumas, which paralyze our actions and our creativity, remain hidden.

The existential unconscious consists of the *factual unconscious*, the *reactive unconscious* and the *decisional unconscious*. The last contains our decisions based on love and on hatred that determine our life and our destiny (see A.M. “*Teoria dell’inconscio esistenziale*” {Theory of the Existential Unconscious}, Published by Costellazione di Arianna, 1995).

Sophia-analysis also explores the transcendental unconscious or the transcendental *Self*. Every human being has one and benefits from its wisdom that operates within us and for us, even when we are unaware of it (see A.M. Theory of the Person and Existential Personalistic Anthropology, published by The Sophia University of Rome (S.U.R.), 2009).

Sophia-analysis aims at helping to become aware of the *laws of life* (those that Homer indicates with the word “*duty*”), and of the actions of the deeper *Self*: of its purpose; its freedom to choose between love or hatred, truth or lies; and of its ability to create and transform itself (see A.M. “*Le Leggi della Vita*” {The Laws of Life}, Published by Sophia University of Rome 1995).

This awareness and this wisdom, united with the art of self-transformation (Sophia-Art and Cosmo-Art), help us recover *lost beauty* and help us create *secondary beauty*.

An individual thus becomes a searcher for *truth* and *freedom* and, with the truth and freedom she gradually manages to obtain, becomes a person who recognizes a *creative artistic power* within, with which she can create and recreate herself an infinite number of times. In this manner, she becomes an artist of her own life and an artist of the life of the cosmos to which she belongs.

Sophia-Art is the art of transforming oneself through unifying all the split and fragmented parts that we all carry inside ourselves from the moment we entered into life on.

This is done by first developing “awareness”, which is deep and lasting knowledge of ourselves. Then, the *I Person*’s “artistic decision” to create a synthesis of all the opposites that life is made up of must be developed as well (see A.M. “*La vita*

* see Mercurio and Ciapini: “From the Myth of Oedipus to the Myth of Ulysses”, a paper given at the World Congress on Psychotherapy in 2000, and published in Italian in the book “La Sophia-analisi e l’Edipo” {Sophia-Analysis and Oedipus}, Published by Sophia University of Rome, Roma, 2000

come opera d'arte e la vita come dono spiegata in 41 film" {Life as a Work of Art and Life as a Gift Explored in 41 Films}, Published by the Sophia University of Rome, (S.U.R.) Rome, 1995).

Cosmo-Art is the art of knowing how to give human life a new cosmological framework and a new cosmic identity, which makes the "flow of particles that we are" (see Olga Karitidi) a precious part of the single living organism that is the Cosmos in which we live (see A.M. Theorems and Axioms of Cosmo-Art, Published by Sophia University of Rome, Rome, 2009 and also The Ulysseans, Published by Sophia University of Rome 2009).

Cosmo-Art is the art of alchemical transformation, which is the result of the fusion of cosmic and human forces and the fusion of pain, wisdom and art (see A.M. "*La nascita della Cosmo-Art*" {The Birth of Cosmo-Art} Published by Sophia University of Rome, Rome 2000).

It is the art of the creation of *secondary beauty*, a type of beauty that never dies and that can travel from one universe to the next, forever (see "*I Laboratori Corali della Cosmo-Art*" {The Cosmo-Art Group Laboratories} Published by Sophia University of Rome, Rome 2006).

Here I would like to underline that there is a profound difference between searching for knowledge and searching for truth. The truth lies deep within and it takes great pain and courage to obtain it; knowledge lies on the surface and requires study and consistence; it requires work, but not pain.

CHAPTER III

VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE BEAUTY

Homer's poems all gravitate around the contrast between beauty that is visible and beauty that is invisible. In the words of Cosmo-Art, this contrast is essentially between *primary beauty*, which is ephemeral and mortal and *secondary beauty*, which is immortal and can only be created by human beings through the fusion of human and cosmic forces. The meaning of life and the reason death exists can be explained by this type of creation. If death did not exist, no one would look for a way to become immortal. The quest for *secondary beauty* is the way that Cosmo-Art suggests we can achieve immortality.

In Homer, the presence of the gods represents cosmic forces and the presence of humans represents human forces and human creativity.

While almost all the gods from the Greek Olympus are present in the Iliad, only a few are found in the Odyssey: Zeus, Poseidon, Athena, Hermes, Apollo and a couple more of lesser importance.

In the Iliad, the gods maneuver humans at their pleasure; in the Odyssey, the gods speak to humans and the humans decide whether to listen to them. The most notable dialogues are those that take place between Athena and Ulysses and between Hermes and Ulysses before he arrives at Circe's island.

The gods are inside of us and they represent the deepest parts of ourselves, both positive and negative. That the gods are inside of us is something that sacred Hindu and Egyptian texts state explicitly.

Homer tells us that *primary beauty* brings with it disaster and death for those who remain imprisoned by it (e.g. Helen's beauty, that causes an atrocious ten year war and innumerable deaths between the Achaeans and the Trojans; the Sirens who use the beauty of their song to enchant and then destroy sailors who pass by them; the nymph Calypso, whose beauty imprisons Ulysses on her island for seven long years; Penelope's beauty which causes the death of her one hundred eight suitors).

Secondary beauty, instead, is a result of *concordance* and it brings with it a type of immortality that is superior to the type the immortal gods have.

Homer mentions this *concordance* when Ulysses turns to Nausicaa and he gives her his blessings:

.... "may the gods bring you all the gifts your heart so desires

*a husband and a home may they bring you along with glorious concordance
as well;
nothing is more beautiful and more precious than this
when with a single soul man and woman run their household;
the malicious are rendered furious
but their friends rejoice and they become well renowned” (Od. VI, 180-185)*

What Ulysses wishes for Nausicaa is the goal that in his own heart he hopes he and Penelope can reach. This is a very difficult goal to achieve, especially for those who do not love themselves, or know how to love. It is an enormous challenge for those who are full of pride and expectations, who remain in their mother's grip and are slaves to all the human passions.

Every event in the Odyssey stimulates Ulysses' knowledge and transformation of himself. They help him leave hatred and revenge behind, they help him learn to forgive, and they help him learn to respect himself and others. Each step is indispensable in creating the “*glorious concordance*” between Ulysses and Penelope.

The creation of *concordance* between a man and a woman is the most difficult goal that exists. The will to dominate the other, reciprocal violence and control, alternating enmeshment and sadomasochism are what almost all couples experience just as soon as the initial phase of falling in love is over. Very few are those who fight to create the beauty of *concordance*, while many continue living in total enmeshment, which is at times healthy, and at others perverse.

Creating *concordance* is the same as creating *secondary beauty*, the type of beauty which creates immortality and which is *immortal*.

This project contains the goal of Life and of the Cosmic Self, of the Yin-Yang fusion as described in oriental thought.

The difference is that this fusion is a natural given on a cosmic level, while it most certainly is not between a man and a woman.

To achieve *concordance* between a man and a woman, to create a type of beauty that is superior on a cosmic level: this is what I see as being at the heart of Homer's poem.

When Homer speaks of Helen's beauty, of the beauty of Achilles' weapons forged by Hephaestus, of Aphrodite's beauty who betrays her lame husband with Ares the god of war, and of Penelope's beauty that is sought after by 108 suitors, he is speaking of *visible* beauty.

But what most interests him is to speak of the invisible beauty that Ulysses can create with the help of Zeus and Athena, as long as he decides to become an artist of his own life and the life of the universe, after having understood that this is the cosmic purpose that he is called to fulfill.

This beauty is most certainly superior to the beauty of the immortal gods. Otherwise, there is no explanation for the fact that Ulysses refuses the immortality that Circe and Calypso promise him, if he would only renounce Penelope.

Gilgamesh searched desperately for immortality but was unable to attain it.

The Pharaohs built their pyramids as signs of their presumed immortality; the Chinese emperors brought their armies of terracotta soldiers to the grave with them, ready to serve in the afterworld.

Religions have always competed to be the guarantors of their followers' immortality.

This is human history.

So who is Ulysses to say no to the immortality that Circe and Calypso want to give him?

What is Homer thinking, that no one else has ever thought of? The alternative he has in mind is the alchemical transformation of Ulysses (transforming lead into gold was the goal, described symbolically, of the alchemists) and the impossible opus that it can create, which is *secondary beauty*.

It is important to reflect on the fact that not only Zeus gets tired of Hera's beauty, but also Ulysses tires of Calypso and her beauty.

This indeed is thought provoking for those who are convinced that if they enjoy God's beauty, the beatific vision, they will be happy into eternity.

By night, Ulysses lies with Calypso, but during the day, he goes to the seashore to cry because he cannot get back to Ithaca.

*... "yes there below the dazzling goddess Calypso wanted to keep me
in her deep grottoes wishing I would be her husband
Circe kept me in her house the same way
the seductive goddess wanting that I be her spouse
never did they persuade my heart". (Od.IX, 29-33)*

Here Ulysses affirms with conviction that neither Circe nor Calypso can stop him from continuing to believe in his goal of cultivating his relationship with Penelope. The Nymph Calypso tells us how Ulysses is constantly thinking of Penelope:

*"Ulysses, noble son of Laertes
so home to the land of your forefathers
you will now go? Good, may you be happy!
But if only you knew how much suffering
awaits you, before you reach your homeland,
staying here with me, you could share my home
and become immortal, **even though you are so anxious***

to see your bride again, whom you call out for every day.” (Od. V, 203-211)

He answers Calypso:

*“Oh sovereign goddess, don’t be angry with me over this: I know,
and very well at that, that compared to you wise Penelope
is nothing in terms of looks and greatness:
she is mortal, and you are immortal and age does not touch you.
But even so I wish to return home, and I invoke the gods
to allow me to return.
If still some one of them will wish to torment me on the stormy sea,
I will tolerate it, because my heart is used to suffering.
I have suffered immensely, I have faced many dangers
between the waves and in war: after all that, may this come to pass as well!”
(Od. V. 215-224)*

In my opinion, Ulysses is saying to the goddess Calypso, your beauty is certainly superior to Penelope’s, but I prefer the immortal beauty I can create myself, together with Penelope. For this reason, I can accept the endless suffering that the gods have inflicted on me during my long return home, as well as the ones that they may still want to torment me with.

Most certainly, Homer is speaking about beauty that is invisible to the eye but visible to the heart, through Ulysses’ words.

The second Homer centered his life on the creation of this beauty, contrary to the first Homer, who in the Iliad honors the beauty of weapons and of glorious death in battle.

Homer is also saying, between the lines, how much is the gods’ immortality really worth, anyway?

Here he is an inconspicuous forerunner to the pre-Socratic philosophers, which soon after would dismantle the belief in the existence of the gods and their presumed immortality.

Homer’s cosmological vision is not in line with the beliefs that were prevalent among the Greeks of his time, even though he uses the gods they venerated in his poem.

He utilizes the gods as powerful symbols of the cosmic forces that are within human beings, but, through the personage of Ulysses, he gives more importance to humans than to the gods. Only humans can create an immortal type of beauty that is superior to the supposed immortality of the gods, with, of course, the help of cosmic forces.

In my opinion, this is the most important meaning behind Homer's portrayal of how Ulysses politely refuses the immortality offered to him by Calypso, should he accept to marry her.

Homer's poetic transmission of his ideas avoids creating a scandal, and so they can easily circulate without religious or political censure attacking them, as instead happens later on with Socrates.

The Greeks and other Mediterranean peoples, particularly the Etruscans, were convinced that the Odyssey was not an adventure story but rather was a book of *wisdom*.

What is wisdom? The art of loving oneself and the art of loving others.

However, supreme wisdom is the art of knowing how to create for oneself an immortal soul without anyone having handed it out already formed. This soul, that each must create for him or herself, is the *single soul* that Ulysses speaks to Nausicaa about.

The creation of the type of beauty that emanates from the ability of two souls to become one, as described by Homer, is the creation of *secondary beauty* as described by Cosmo-Art.

This is my own conviction, and my ideas come from the wisdom I gleaned while I meditated on my own experiences and on those of Ulysses.

Well before Homer wrote the Odyssey, Ulysses was a mythical figure that the Greeks had widely fantasized about. Many different versions regarding him were created over time, and they were often completely different from each other.

Homer collects some of these versions and leaves others out, according to his own personal choices. In this manner, he creates a poetic figure whose roots lie in the myths, but who becomes a specific creation of Homer's personal ideas. Homer incarnates his own beliefs and values in the beliefs and values of Ulysses. Ulysses is Homer and what happens to Ulysses is Homer's personal story, whether he actually experienced these things or even perhaps only dreamed and fantasized about them.

One clue that can help us understand that Ulysses is none other than Homer is in the eighth Book, where Ulysses, with his hiccoughs, astutely makes Demodocus stop singing and he himself starts telling his own tormented story. His storytelling abilities are so great that the Phaeacians do not want him to stop.

Just as Homer is a storyteller, so is Demodocus, and so is Ulysses, who, through the mastery of his tale telling, substitutes both. But this is an example of Homer's cunning, who by describing Ulysses is actually describing himself.

In the first verses of the poem, Ulysses is referred to as a very ingenious man. He has met many different people, he has suffered much pain and even

though he wanted to save his companions, he was unable to, because of their insanity caused by their greed, envy and hatred.

It seems very strange to me that of these verses readers only remember his cunning and thirst for knowledge. No one seems to stop and wonder about the *many woes* that Ulysses had to endure.

Why is it that no one remembers the pain Ulysses goes through and everyone remembers only his cunning?

I believe that everyone wants to be cunning like Ulysses, but very few are willing to suffer and transform himself as he is.

Again, in the proem, Zeus complains about the mad Aegisthus, who did not want to listen to the wise advice that the god had sent to him via Hermes. The whole Odyssey, instead, is the story of how Ulysses listens to the wise counsel that Athena constantly offers him.

Through reading the whole poem, it becomes evident that Homer wants to compare Ulysses to Aegisthus, one being wise and the other being mad. He also wants to compare Ulysses to his companions who are all dead due to their madness.

While Ulysses and Aegisthus are obviously two different characters, I believe that Ulysses represents only one part of Homer, while Ulysses' travelling companions represent the other part.

Therefore, both madness and wisdom are equally present within the same human being, and humanity is free to choose between wisdom and madness.

If Ulysses' companions die, it is his madness and his crazy parts that die. If Ulysses survives, it is his wisdom that saves him.

Is Human life thus a painful wandering between madness and wisdom or rather a continual journey from madness towards wisdom? From Ithaca to Troy and from Troy back to Ithaca?

And if so, why?

Because this, as Malraux would say, is simply the human condition? Or is it because, as Cosmo-Art would say, human beings have a purpose, to create *Secondary Beauty*, immortal beauty, the type of beauty that never dies? A type of beauty that is different from *primary beauty*, which is, instead, ephemeral and mortal?

In this second case, wisdom is not an end unto itself, as perfection instead is for Jews and Christians, or Illumination is for the Buddhists. Its purpose is to develop the human artistic ability to create immortal beauty that the Universe or the gods alone will never be able to create. If we can combine wisdom, pain and art, as Cosmo-Art suggests, we can extract beauty from ugliness, and we can create a type of immortal beauty that renders those who create it immortal.

In this view, the Odyssey is no longer an odyssey as many see it but it is an *initiation* or an alchemical journey, which narrates the voyage of men and women from a condition of mortality to one of immortality.

This journey requires a profound transformation; it requires the transformation of one's darkness into light.

This is why wisdom, cunning, deep humility and the ability to accept pain creatively, and not masochistically, are necessary.

A similar process happens in the Cosmos when a star is created. First, there is a dark cloud, and then this cloud condenses and collapses on itself, then, as the result of tremendous pressure, it reaches a temperature of millions of degrees. Finally, the atoms fuse in a thermonuclear reaction, creating light and new atoms that did not exist before. Does the cloud suffer; does the star suffer as humans do?

The Greeks left us not only Homer's poems but they also spoke to us of the Orphic and Eleusian Mysteries. We know very little about these "mysteries" because their adepts were bound to absolute secrecy. What we do know is that they were trying to become immortal.

I believe that what we can never know about the content of these mysteries we can discover by lifting the veil from Homer's verses.

The Odyssey begins where the Iliad left off.

For a long time I asked myself: what is the connection between these two poems?

In my book *The Ulysseans*, I hypothesized that the Iliad narrates the intense battle that sperm undertake when they try to enter into the ovum.

The Odyssey, instead, narrates everything the human being must undergo so as to cross the turbulent ocean of the amniotic sac without being destroyed (see *The Ulysseans*, chapter VII, Published by Sophia University of Rome, 2009).

This is a first interpretation. There is also a second one.

The Trojan War begins because Paris, a Trojan prince, stole Helen from Menelaus and brought her with him to Troy.

A battle becomes necessary to regain lost beauty. However, Helen's beauty, which was considered as being the greatest in the world, is an ephemeral beauty, a beauty that age can damage and death can destroy.

The Greeks were not willing to settle for ephemeral beauty and a large number of poets, sculptors, painters and artists of all types attempted to create a type of beauty that would be immortal and that would make them immortal as well.

The Iliad speaks of the horrors of war, of the ugliness of death, of the ugliness of Achilles' wrath and of the hybris of Agamemnon, which caused so much grief for the Achaeans.

The Odyssey speaks of the journey from ugliness to a superior type of beauty that death cannot damage.

Human beings have the ability to create ugliness and they have the ability to create beauty that does not yet exist.

Among all the Greek heroes that crowd the Iliad, Homer chooses Ulysses to show us that it is possible, through thousands of painful transformations, to create immortal beauty that is superior to the type of immortal beauty created by artists or attributed to the gods.

CHAPTER IV

TELEMACHUS AND ULYSSES

It is important to understand why Homer devotes the first chapters of the *Odyssey* to Telemachus, Ulysses' son.

Some believe it is because the Greek mythologists had composed a *Telemachia* apart from the myth of Ulysses and that Homer incorporated it into the *Odyssey* so his readers would not be disappointed.

I believe there is a deeper reason.

In the Greek world, there is a theme that acquires ever-greater significance as time goes on. It is the decision that men and women must make, at some point during their lives, to pass from the maternal world to the paternal one.

The *Oresteia* is the most intense text that the Greeks have left us to describe how dramatic this passage is.

Orestes hesitates a long time before he decides to make this passage. Apollo incites him continuously to vindicate his father Agamemnon, killed by Aegisthus, conspiring with his mother Clytemnestra. But Orestes cannot decide.

About twenty years go by and finally Orestes leaves his place of exile to go and kill his mother and her lover. This will be a decision that will torment him with deep feelings of guilt for another twenty years, until Athena comes to his rescue by setting up an official trial. Half of the jurors declare him guilty and the other half declare him innocent: Athena absolves him completely and she transforms the Furies that were persecuting him into Eumenides (see the *Oresteia* of Aeschylus).

As soon as Athena obtains permission from Zeus to free Ulysses from the prison Calypso keeps him in, she runs to Ithaca to incite Telemachus to travel to Sparta in search of news of his father.

It is important to note that Athena is asking Telemachus to leave the maternal dimension and to enter into the paternal one.

Travelling by land and sea to try to find information about his father, without telling his mother about this voyage, is a practical way of undertaking this fundamental passage in the life of human beings.

Mothers, except for in rare occasions, don't want their children to make this passage and they often, either openly or behind the scenes, threaten with death those children who dare to challenge their power.

Historically, mothers have allied with their children to eliminate the father.

Telemachus, who, as Athena points out, is not lacking in his father's cunning, informs only his governess Euryclea of his voyage. He asks her to swear she will not say anything to his mother.

By keeping Penelope in the dark about his plans, he breaks the complicity that so often exists between mother and son. Telemachus does it with a cunning that is worthy of his father Ulysses.

Penelope must know nothing of his journey, says Telemachus to Euryclea, because it would make her cry and he does not want her tears to damage her beauty!

*... his governess Euryclea moaned
and crying fleeting tears she spoke:
"Why dear creature, is this thought in
your heart? Why do you think of going out in the world, alone,
you who are so young? He died far from his homeland,
among unknown people, divine Ulysses.
As soon as you leave, the suitors will plot behind your back,
to have you die in an accident, and all this they will then divide
amongst them.
No, stay here and guard what is yours: it's not necessary
that you suffer on the tireless sea and you get lost!"
But wise Telemachus answered her:
"Come on, grandmother: this plan is not without help from a god.
But swear you will not tell my mother any of this
until at least the eleventh or twelfth day,
or until she herself is looking for me or realizes I have left,
because I don't want her to ruin her beauty with her crying"
He said this, and the old woman swore the great oath to the gods.
And after she had sworn, she completed the formula,
and immediately poured wine into his casks
and filled his well-sown sacks with flour.
Telemachus returned to the hall and mingled among the suitors.
(Od. II, 360-380)*

We also know that by making this decision Telemachus is risking his life, because as soon as the Suitors find out about it, they decide to go out to sea and surprise him when he returns, to kill him.

Is it by chance that the Suitors plot to kill both Telemachus and Ulysses or is it instead that they are acting in complicity with the unconscious will of

Penelope, who, not having yet decided to become a woman capable of loving, wants to eliminate both her husband and her son?

We must not forget that if the Suitors are in Ulysses' house this is possible only because Penelope has allowed that they become, in some way, an extension of her will.

Athena will be the one to save Telemachus from this mortal threat, but the threat itself shows how dramatic such a decision is.

Penelope's ambiguity and complicity with the Suitors becomes evident if we look at how she acts when Medon tells her what the Suitors are plotting.

*But it wasn't long until Penelope found out
the plans the Suitors were plotting in their hearts:
Medon the herald told her of them, that he had overheard
while standing outside the courtyard, and those inside discussed their plans
He thus went to the other side of the palace to tell Penelope (Od. IV, 675-679)*

When Penelope finds out, first she cries pitifully, then she gets angry with her attendants who had not told her, then she decides to warn Laertes so he can tell the people of Ithaca and finally she asks Athena to help her.

*Curse you all! None of you found it within your heart
to rouse me from my bed, even though you obviously knew
when he boarded the black ship? (Od. IV, 729-731)
... now someone go right away to call old Dolius...
... who immediately
will tell Laertes everything and stay near him (Od. IV, 735-738)*

This to me seems like a scene she makes so as to deceive herself even more than the others. The only right thing that she should have done doesn't even cross her mind.

Why didn't she go into the palace hall where the Suitors were camped and kick them all out, calling them assassins?

CHAPTER V

FROM THE MATERNAL TO THE PATERNAL AND FROM THE EARTH TO THE COSMOS

Keeping in mind this initial theme that introduces the reader to the story that Ulysses will tell of his odyssey, to me it seems only right to think that if we want to understand Homer's poem on a deep level, we must also consider that Ulysses' journey after the fall of Troy is a decision to leave the maternal dimension, and enter the paternal one with more conviction. This time it is a radical decision, and it leads him not only from the maternal to the paternal dimensions, but from the earthly one to a cosmic one, from the biological father to the cosmic father.

Ulysses' return after Troy is like a deep regression that brings Ulysses back to his intrauterine experience, to the intrauterine incest that had kept him tied to his mother ever since that phase of his existence. He does this so that he can free himself of this bond forever.

The monsters that Ulysses encounters along the way are monsters that he already met in his mother's womb, and especially Polyphemus, the Laestrygonians, the Sirens, Scylla, Charybdis, in some ways Circe and Calypso, and last of all the Suitors. Ulysses must re-experience every aspect of the maternal dimension, re-live it in all its drama and all the pleasure that it can offer, so that he can then detach himself from it completely.

He must face the mother who devours and the mother that seduces and castrates, who wants to devour his life and use him for her own needs.

He must unmask his unconscious complicity with this devouring and castrating mother, and he must muster all the courage he can find to free himself of her.

This is an enormous task, much more real and challenging than the one Hercules faces with his 12 labours.

We must particularly underline one important aspect: the gods ordered this regression. Zeus ordered it, and Athena and Hermes are always present during the most crucial moments.

It is a voyage through the abyss of the past and at the same time, it is a flight towards infinite spaces impossible to imagine.

Why is that Zeus and Athena so intensely want Ulysses to make this journey and accomplish this passage?

Here, going from the maternal to the paternal dimension no longer means simply moving from the sphere of influence of his mother Anticlea to that of his father Laertes.

Here the passage is even bigger; Ulysses must contact the *Cosmic SELF* so he can fulfill the purpose that he has been assigned, the creation of *secondary beauty*, which the cosmic forces by themselves cannot achieve. Their forces must combine with human forces to make it possible.

It has to do with the passage of Ulysses from this universe to other universes, something he can do only with the immortal energy that *secondary beauty* is made of, a synthesis and condensation of many types of energy combined together.

All this cannot happen without yet another, even more radical passage: to shift from the status of a mere victim of the many woes the gods afflict on him, to that of an artist that knows how to transform his own life and the life of the universe. Thus he can open up to all the infinite universes that are beyond the limits of this universe.

Poseidon, the god of the sea, of water in general and the powerful symbol of the Great Mother, is right when he wants to hinder Ulysses' journey.

The true reason behind Poseidon's hatred for Ulysses is not to vindicate Polyphemus, whom Ulysses blinded, as it appears at first sight.

The more significant reason is that Poseidon, the Great devouring Mother, the mythical figure of the Ouroborus as described by E. Neumann, was himself blinded and deceived by Ulysses while in the shape of Polyphemus. And not only does Ulysses manage to leave the cave in which Polyphemus held him prisoner, but he manages to free himself of the suffocating power that surrounds him, and prepares to leave the womb of this universe and fly towards other universes, as the *Cosmic Self* wishes him to do.

Poseidon with his trident is the symbol of the phallic mother who believes she has the right to life or death over her children. How can one not hate this type of mother, and worse, how can one not adopt the defense mechanism of identifying with the aggressor? But we cannot build life on hatred and on defense mechanisms. They hold up for a while and then fall to pieces. Life must be based on love and not on hatred and guilt.

Ulysses manages to solve the problem at its core. For ten years, he travels by sea so he can meet the monsters created by repressed hatred. After that, he travels by land until he finds complete forgiveness, radical forgiveness. Forgiveness towards others and towards himself. Forgiveness towards his mother and towards himself for having hated his mother for so long. Finding total forgiveness means creating *concordance* between the conscious *I* and the unconscious *I*. In this manner, there is peace and serenity, the beauty of life and, if there is *concordance* between an *I* and a *You*, between an *I* and Others, between an *I* and the Cosmos,

there is *secondary beauty*. Ulysses finds it, and because of having found it, he ages happily.

When, during the massacre of the Suitors, we see Telemachus beside Ulysses, we see not only a son who is fighting alongside his father. We also see Ulysses fighting alongside the *Cosmic Self*. He is fighting to overcome the limitations that the laws of physics have assigned to this universe and thus allow Life as it exists in this universe to fly off, now in immortal form, towards new universes.

It is a bit like what happened in remote times, when life, which had developed in the oceans in vegetable and animal form, took an impossible flight, and invaded the yet unexplored spaces of earth and sky.

Ulysses with his powerful bow is a symbol of Life, who shoots an arrow with absolute precision through the twelve axes, one after the next. It is the arrow of the living organism that is the cosmos we live in now, but in which we are not destined to remain forever, if we pass through all the rings of biological and artistic spiritual evolution.

This means becoming one with Life and one with the Cosmos. It is not the mystical feeling of being one with the One and of losing oneself in the oceanic joy this fusion offers, but of completely and humbly dedicating oneself to the creation of *secondary beauty*, which is the goal of Life.

Only through this type of creativity, can Life become both eternal and immortal in a new life form. Because life is eternal, because it flows through time eternally, but it is not immortal, because it must always die and be reborn, by passing from one form to another. This new form of life is a constant blending of being and becoming, and it no longer has to die or to suffer. It is a form of life that is a constant fusion of opposing values, of truth, love, freedom and beauty.

This is the supreme work of art that the combination of human and cosmic forces can create.

This is the mystery of the art of the great masters as far as we know today; this is the mystery of the next type of possible artistic adventure, that gathers its vital impetus from humanity's nagging desire to become immortal (see A.M. *Theorems and Axioms of Cosmo-Art*, Published by Sophia University of Rome, 2009).

Dante acknowledges Ulysses as a master of "virtue and knowledge", but does not understand the true nature of his "mad flight".

In Dante's time, though, the whole text of the Odyssey was not yet available in the West. In addition, Christian mythology also deeply influenced Dante, which

was based on the ideologies of Aristotle and Plato, where the universe is seen as a closed system with nothing beyond it.

CHAPTER VI

THE SYNTHESIS OF OPPOSITES, BEAUTY AND IMMORTALITY

Every transformation of the *global I* is a death that has been overcome. Every passage from one dimension of the *global I* to a higher dimension brings the death of one identity, so that a new one, superior to the former, can emerge.

With every death that Ulysses must face so he can transform himself, Ulysses creates beauty and begins accumulating it within himself. This happens at every death that his *fetal I* undergoes, which holds so much power over him and which does not allow the Artistic Self to emerge; it happens with every death of some part of his animal instincts, based on thievery and violence, that Ulysses has carried within himself since the day he was born.

This type of beauty is immortal, because it springs from Ulysses' emerging ability to continually *synthesize pairs of opposites*, as well as from his having been able to face death.

At times the necessary synthesis is of death with life. Others it is the synthesis of love and hatred to create *loving strength*. At yet other times it is the synthesis of the *I* with the *Personal Self*, symbolized by Athena; at times it is the synthesis of the *I* with the *Cosmic Self*, represented by Zeus. And sometimes it is the synthesis of the *I* with a *You*, of the masculine with the feminine, represented by the various female personages that Ulysses encounters along his way and that are always positively transformed by their meeting him.

By continually *synthesizing opposites*, Ulysses acts as an artist who transforms his own life into a work of art.

It is a work of art that contains immortal beauty, which at times is visible to the eye, but often is only visible to the eyes of the heart.

Homer narrates that this beauty can appear suddenly in all of its splendor with a simple touch of Athena's grace. Or, it can be hidden, like when Ulysses disguises himself as a beggar, if that is what Ulysses must do to face the Suitors and Penelope.

This beauty can emerge while he tells the tale of his adventures by sea that so enchant the Phaeacian queen and king, princes and princesses.

The Phaeacians decide to load him up with gifts and, even more surprisingly, they decide to take him to Ithaca on their fastest boat, disobeying Poseidon's prohibition, knowing very well that he – their father – will punish them for doing so and turn them into a block of stone. (*Od. XIII, 155-158*)

This beauty makes Ulysses immortal. It keeps him alive forever, capable of generating new life, today and for eternity.

All the other Greek heroes are vague shadows when compared to him. They are shadows who cry over the lives they once had because they do not know how to take advantage of their loss and transform it into a work of art, as Ulysses manages to do.

Homer makes this clear when he speaks of Ulysses' descent into Hades. (*Od. XI*)

There, Ulysses, who is alive and who came into Hades as a living man, watches the shadows of thousands of those who lived in the past (Agamemnon, Achilles, Patroclus, Ajax - who even dead refuses to forgive - and many other men, women and semi-gods) parade before him.

This is Homer's ingenious way of telling us that Ulysses has conquered a type of immortality that the others do not have, and that by descending into Hades he has also understood deep truths about himself. He has done so by reflecting on the destinies of those who went before him, on life and the world.

Ulysses became immortal not because he went up to Mount Olympus like Heracles, a Greek hero who became a semi-god but whose shadow is also in Hades. He did not achieve immortality because he died in battle and was covered in glory like Achilles, who in Hades cried over his loss of life. He became immortal because he faced many *internal deaths*. He passed from the fetal and animal dimension of intrauterine life, which imprisons every human being even until well after birth, to the artistic dimension that straddles the confines of this universe and can navigate from one universe to another, into eternity.

Ulysses became immortal not because he received immortality from the gods but because he built it himself, with his pain, his wisdom and his art.

Ulysses is immortal because he will live forever in Homer's verses. He is immortal because he lives in the works of art that were created after Homer and which mention him.

He is immortal because he has become an archetype in the collective unconscious of humanity.

He is immortal because he has become an integral part of the cosmic consciousness of this universe and he has the ability to travel within not only this universe, but also to other possible universes that today we are not yet aware of.

CHAPTER VII

AN OUTLINE OF ONE POSSIBLE VIEW OF THE ODYSSEY AS AN ALCHEMICAL PROCESS WITH A COSMIC PURPOSE

THE FUNDAMENTAL STEPS OF THIS PROCESS

- ◆ The theme of *wisdom* is introduced in the proem: Zeus offers wise advice to everyone.
Those who receive it are free to accept it or reject it.
The theme of *pain* is also introduced: Ulysses is the man of a thousand woes.
The theme of the *laws of life* is introduced as well (those who act “against duty” will die as a result of their folly). Wisdom, pain and art are indispensable in the realization of a cosmic goal.
- ◆ The *cosmic goal* is laid out through Telemachus’ actions: to pass from the maternal dimension to the paternal one, even at the risk of one’s life, and thus to create immortal beauty. The Suitors, who have an *arrogant heart*, must be faced and destroyed.
- ◆ Through his life experiences Ulysses revisits the internal monsters that have been living within him since the time of his prenatal life and he wisely faces the immense pain that they cause.
The internal monsters:
 - The *devouring mother* and the complicity of the *fetal I* to allow itself to be devoured (devouring mothers : Polyphemus, the Laestrygonians, Scylla and Charybdis, the Suitors).
 - The *seductive and castrating mother* (Circe the enchantress).
 - The *incestuous mother* and the seductive pleasure of *intrauterine incest* (the Sirens and Calypso).
 - The *phallic and assassin mother* (Polyphemus, Poseidon, the haughty Suitors who enter Ulysses’ house with Penelope’s unconscious complicity).
- ◆ Ulysses revisits the *five poisons* that dwell within human beings and hinder the development of wisdom and the creation of new beauty:
 - *Hybris and rage* (Ulysses gives ample proof of both of these in the way he acts with Polyphemus, but the best representatives of these poisons are the Suitors, where the Suitors are expression of Ulysses as well).

- *Repressed hatred and the homicidal impulse* (without acknowledging the hatred that we have repressed since our intrauterine experience we cannot completely comprehend Poseidon's hostility towards Ulysses, nor can we understand the "last trial" of the journey by land and sea that Teireisias orders Ulysses to undertake once he has returned to Ithaca). This journey is very similar to the one that for centuries pilgrims have made to San Juan de Compostella (Finis Terrae).

- *Greed and the existential lie* (in Ulysses' decision to devour the sacred cows of the Sun god on the island of Trinachia his own greed, as well the greed of his companions, is evident).

- *Envy and the suicidal impulse* (Ulysses combats both of these in the episode of the bag of winds).

- The infinite, *arrogant demands* of the *fetal I* (the Suitors are excellent representatives of these and since they have forcibly taken over Ulysses' and Penelope's home it is not difficult to understand how they really belong to the two of them and to their own personal history).

◆ ULYSSES' LANDING ON THE PHAEACIAN ISLAND.

- Ulysses celebrates the recovery of the "*beauty of life*" that he had lost because of the trauma he suffered during his intrauterine experience.

- When he meets Nausicaa, Ulysses clearly formulates the *cosmic goal* that human beings are entrusted with for the first time: the creation of "*glorious concordance*" or the type of immortal beauty that is the result of a synthesis of opposites, the fusion of man and woman in a *single soul*.

- Ulysses easily detaches himself from the "*primary beauty*" that Nausicaa represents so he can go on and create a superior type of beauty with Penelope.

◆ ULYSSES LANDS AT ITHACA

- With Athena's help, Ulysses prepares for the *massacre of the Suitors* by accepting to transform himself into a *beggar*. He thus completes the transformation of his *arrogant heart* into a *humble heart*.

- Ulysses shoots an arrow through twelve axe rings placed in a row. This action represents the evolution of his life and of Life itself, which constantly passes from one identity to another, from one birth to another, from one universe to another.

- Ulysses massacres the Suitors with the help of Athena, Telemachus, Eumaeus and Melanthius, as was announced in the beginning of the poem.

- Ulysses manages to transform Penelope and her *heart of stone* into a woman who recognizes and loves him. With her, he accomplishes the "*glorious concordance*" that is the symbol of *secondary beauty* or immortal

beauty. Homer dedicates 12 out of 24 chapters to describe this process, which is the central theme of the poem.

- ◆ ULYSSES leaves for the journey that Teireisias tells him he must take, a journey to the ends of the earth. Penelope, who is now a *single soul* with her spouse, consents to this without feeling abandoned.
- ◆ ULYSSES completely makes peace with Poseidon and with all the gods. This is the full achievement of *cosmic harmony* and of the fusion of the *I* with the Cosmos. This is the completion of the cosmic goal. Now Ulysses can live out a peaceful old age while he waits for a gentle death that will come to him while he is at sea.

Another way of outlining the process could be:

FIRST THEME: The search for beauty and immortality using wisdom, pain and art;

SECOND THEME: The search for self knowledge and deep inner truth;

THIRD THEME: The extermination of the Suitors and the conquest of Penelope's heart to create the "*glorious concordance*".

We will go further into depth on the five poisons from chapter 21 on; now I would like to say something about alchemy.

The history of alchemy stretches across thousands of years and it has existed throughout this time, in various forms and languages, on all five continents.

The best interpretation of it that I have found in modern terms is in Carl Gustav Jung's book "*Psychology and Alchemy*", which I recommend to those readers who want to explore this topic in greater depth.

The more common notion is that of the alchemist who works day and night to try to transform lead into gold, but Jung looks at this as a symbol that instead is speaking of a much more important transformation, the interior transformation of human beings.

The height of this transformation is reached through the "*coniunctio oppositorum*" {union of opposites} or by the synthesis of opposites, and in particular through the synthesis of the masculine and feminine principles within each man and woman and in the male-female couple.

Classic alchemy describes this process of transformation in four stages, often called black, white, red and green.

Here it is important to read the Cosmo-Artistic interpretation of the film “*Swept from the Sea*” written by Toto Saporito and published in the book “I Laboratori Corali di Cosmo-Art”, {*The Cosmo-Art Choral Group Laboratories*} published by Sophia University of Rome, 2006.

The type of alchemy Homer proposed is much simpler. Everyone can understand it.

There is a *higher power* that organizes the life of the Universe and the life of human beings, which are at one with the Universe. The Universe is a single living organism. This higher power has nothing to do with the god of the philosophers or the god of the theologians.

Homer calls this higher power Zeus. I have translated this with the name *Cosmic SELF* but the name is only a linguistic convention.

Between this higher power and every single human being there is continual communication through the transmission of *wise suggestions* that humans can either listen to or refuse to listen to.

In his poem, Homer illustrates this communication through Athena and Hermes’ actions in favor of Ulysses, Telemachus and Penelope. Athena and Hermes were well known figures to the readers of Homer’s time. This is no longer true today and I have translated both their names with the name of *Personal SELF*.

The line of communication between the *Personal SELF* and the *Cosmic SELF* is always open (i.e. Athena’s , Hermes’ and Zeus’ intervention) , but if the human *global I* is not taught how to participate in this dialog (see chapter XXIII in “*The prayer of the Ulysseans*” it will be difficult to perceive it correctly.

Homer says that Zeus gives “trials” to those that he has chosen to undergo the alchemical process, in various ways through their life experiences (*Od. I, 18* and *Od. XXIII, 248*). These experiences seem random, but they are not.

Ulysses is a very patient and courageous man. Pain does not frighten or discourage him but often, during every test, first he rebels against it and then he finally says yes. This is human and just. There is no hypocrisy here.

What counts is to reach the goal and the goal is the “*coniunctio oppositorum*” {union of opposites} that Homer calls “*glorious concordance*” (*Od. VI, 181*).

He reaches this in full at the end of the poem, after the trial with the bow and arrow and after the massacre of the Suitors.

Ulysses and Penelope make love on a bed carved from the trunk of an olive tree (a symbol of peace and harmony) after they were separated for twenty painful years; they are the symbol of the obtained *concordance*.

This *concordance* was possible only between Ulysses and Penelope and not between Ulysses and Circe and Calypso or Ulysses and Nausicaa, as happens in other versions of the myth of Ulysses and that Homer did not utilize in his poem.

Concordance is not an end in itself, nor does it belong to the individuals that manage to create it. The type of immortal beauty that it produces serves to create the immortal soul of the Universe and of those who have dedicated their lives to this goal.

Ulysses does not journey alone, he journeys for the whole Universe.

CHAPTER VIII

ULYSSES ACCEPTS ZEUS' REQUEST TO CREATE NEW BEAUTY BY EXTRACTING IT FROM WISDOM, PAIN AND ART

The sometimes painful and sometimes pleasurable decisions that Ulysses makes during his voyage are:

- To reach the goal of recuperating lost beauty (the landing on the island of the Phaeacians) and of creating a new type of beauty (the encounter between Ulysses and Penelope after the massacre of the Suitors).
- To bring about the fusion of the *I Person* and the *SELF* through prayer-dialog-action (the continual fusion with Athena).
- To relive and accept the most complete powerlessness so he can acquire the power that comes from doing so (more than once he experiences the most complete powerlessness, so he can extract power from powerlessness).
- To hurt himself rather than hurt others (he enters his own home as a beggar so he can destroy his own arrogant demands as well as Penelope's).
- To achieve the "glorious *concordance*" and through it immortality, by fusing his *I* with a *You* and his *I* with the Cosmos.
- To center himself on the cosmic axis (he grabs on to the fig tree to save himself from Charybdis' whirlpools).
- To fuse together pain, wisdom and art (Ulysses is a man of many woes and his heart is "*accustomed to suffering*"; he is the man who wisely listens to the advice Zeus sends to him, contrary to what his mad companions and Aegisthus does; he is cunning and knows the art of patience in transforming himself and others) so he can create a type of beauty that does not yet exist and that both he and the whole Universe need.
- To accept to lose everything he has and everything he is at certain times in his life: he continually loses his identity so he can acquire a new one; he loses the booty that he conquered at Troy; he loses all his ships and all his companions; he loses his raft while the storm rages around him, which is the only thing he has to hold on to; he risks losing his life many different times.
- His acceptance of all this is described numerous times throughout the poem.

I will not look at these various themes in the order outlined above. I like writing by following the experiences I am living through and the inspiration I have at the time I am writing.

This most certainly will result in a repetition of the themes I am examining, but each time I hope to add something new.

CHAPTER IX

THE FIRST ULYSSES AND THE SECOND ULYSSES

I have recognized in Homer's Iliad and Odyssey the best possible images to illustrate the type of progression found in Sophia-analysis, Sophia-Art and Cosmo-Art as well as their fusion into a theoretical whole. Therefore, in the following chapters I will try to penetrate in depth into the character and the myth of Ulysses.

To comprehend Ulysses as nature made him, a man who based his life on theft and on violence, one must read the Iliad. To understand how Ulysses transformed himself and created *secondary beauty* for both himself and for others, one must learn to read the Odyssey.

With one specific warning.

Most of those who have admired Homer, from Dante Alighieri to modern times, have always seen Ulysses as a man who hungered after knowledge, but also as a man who continually defrauded and deceived others.

According to this view, knowledge and deceit can easily go together. This implies that Ulysses hungers after knowledge but not after truth.

For this reason, Dante Alighieri, in his "*Divine Comedy*", condemns Ulysses to the inferno, after having him die at sea during a storm that overcomes him while he is trying to sail pass the columns of Hercules.

No other commentator has viewed Ulysses as "*the man of many woes*", a man capable of transforming himself and others and of creating a new type of beauty (Homer mentions Ulysses' suffering 59 times throughout his poem). No one has viewed him as a man who, in continual dialog with Athena, the goddess of wisdom, makes his life into a work of art and creates beauty for himself and the whole world. (In the Odyssey, Athena intervenes on Ulysses' behalf 48 times and Ulysses calls on Athena 12 times).

Through constant, attentive reading of the Odyssey, and with the help of Sophia-analysis, Sophia-Art and Cosmo-Art, I have begun to see Ulysses as a mythical man and as an artist of his life, and I want to take him as a role model for my own life.

When Homer speaks of the Ulysses who assaults the Cicones (Od. IX, 39-61), he is referring to the first Ulysses, who is a predator. He has already received a

conspicuous booty with the fall of Troy, but this is not enough for Ulysses' greed: he wants more. The Cicones win the battle and Ulysses must run away.

When Homer describes the Lotus Eaters (Od. IX, 85-104), and Ulysses' companions who fill themselves up with drugs, he is referring to Ulysses' refusal to be born and to grow up. Drugs are like a uterus, and there are many who do not want to leave the maternal womb. Earth is also a uterus, and there are many who do not want to grow up and leave this Earth to explore new universes. This is the first Ulysses.

When Homer talks about Ulysses who drags his drugged companions back onto their ships, he is referring to the second Ulysses, the one who wants to affirm his decision to be born and to grow up.

When Homer tells about the Ulysses who does not want to leave Circe's bed for a whole year (Od. X, 135-475), he is referring to Ulysses' *fetal I*, that wants nothing to do with leaving the uterus and being born. He does not want to die nor does he want to achieve immortality, as defined by the laws of life and in accordance with the goal of the cosmos.

When, instead, he tells us how Ulysses decides to leave and to face first a descent into Hades and after that the Sirens, Scylla and Charybdis, he is referring to the second Ulysses, to his *adult I* that decides to be born and to face life, pain and death, with wisdom and art.

When he speaks of the Ulysses entrapped in Calypso's palace for seven long years (Od. V, 13-224), he is again referring to the conflict that exists between Ulysses' *fetal I* and his *adult I*. The first does not want to leave the womb and the second wants to sail on the open sea to return to Penelope, and create with her the "*glorious concordance*".

The first Ulysses is a predator, and there are many of those around today.
The second Ulysses is an artist, who knows how to create immortal beauty.

CHAPTER X

THE PACT TO CREATE BEAUTY

Before reading the Iliad it is important to know about something that happened before the events described in this poem and that Ulysses played a very interesting role in.

The Achaean princes are all in love with Helen (the search for *primary beauty*), who in those times was considered to be the most beautiful woman in the world. They all go to Sparta with hopes of being chosen to marry her.

Tyndarus, Helen's father, is undecided who to give her to, because he does not want any of the Greek princes to be offended. He is unable to find a solution to this dilemma.

At this point, Ulysses intervenes by making a proposal that solves the problem: Helen, and not her father, will choose whom she wants to marry, but all those who are not chosen will make a pact. They will swear they will all run to Helen's aid should she ever be defiled in any way.

Helen chooses Menelaus and the princes make their pact.

When, some years later, Paris, the Trojan prince, kidnaps Helen and takes her off to Troy, the Greek princes are called to honor their pact. They form a great army and they go to Troy to get Helen back.

While keeping in mind that here we are dealing with a myth and not history, we can attempt to read into what the myth is telling us on a deeper level and try to understand its meaning.

Helen is the most beautiful woman in the world. This means that she is an absolute symbol for beauty. But what kind of beauty are we talking about? Most certainly we are dealing with *primary beauty*, or in other words with the *beauty of life*, but we are certainly not dealing with *secondary beauty*, the type of beauty that never dies.

A woman's beauty is subject to the onslaught of time and death, which at some point come and take it away. Today the kidnapper is Paris, but tomorrow it will be death itself.

What can a man do to attempt to save the beauty that life gave him and that his heart so desperately wants to win over from death?

The Greek princes make a pact. They swear among themselves that they will defend beauty even at the risk of their own lives.

This is the first time we ever hear about a “*pact between men for the protection of beauty*”. It had never happened before, and it will never happen again.

Ulysses proposes the pact and he does obtain one result: Helen will end up returning to Sparta, but for how long? With the help of Ulysses’ cunning, the Greeks conquered Troy and broke through its high walls. Menelaus gets Helen and her beauty back, but this is an ephemeral solution. It will not last and it is not forever.

We cannot definitively solve the problem of how to make sure there is beauty in our lives with cunning and deceit, nor with the use of weapons.

Ulysses understood this when he proposed to make the pact and, in fact, when the Greek princes come to Ithaca to ask him to live up to it and come with them to Troy, he pretends he is crazy and does not want to leave. He leaves only because he is forced to do so (see the Encyclopedia of Greek Mythology).

After ten years of war and an uncountable number of casualties on the battlefield, Troy is destroyed and the Greeks leave to return to their homes. Ulysses, however, knows that the true problem has not been solved, or it has been solved only partially. He knows that other ways will have to be explored that are different from war, cunning and deceit, even though he knows these can be very useful tools.

He knows that it will take something that is not centered on *primary beauty*, that is here today and gone tomorrow.

He will have to look for and create another type of beauty, one that is immortal and not temporary, one that is safe from death and that saves those that know how to create it from death as well. This type of beauty can be obtained only through artful action. In fact, art has the power to transform the *essence* and the *existence* of that which exists in the temporal dimension, so it can pass to an atemporal dimension. This atemporal dimension crosses present time and future time, and becomes eternal.

The artists we are familiar with and appreciate applied this power to the works they painted, sculpted, wrote or sang. Ulysses applies this power to his life and to the life of others and this is the goal of Cosmo-Art.

Ulysses knows that the gods are immortal by their very nature, but what can human beings do to become immortal?

Ulysses leaves for Troy with this question in his mind. He is in no hurry to return to Ithaca. To the contrary, he does not want to return until he has found the secret to immortality.

There was another king in ancient times that shared this same burning desire and that travelled tirelessly by land and sea in search of it. This king was Gilgamesh, but he did not leave an example that can be followed; Ulysses, and Homer for him, did. This example is amply described throughout the Odyssey.

Alchemy is something found in all world cultures. It has its own specific language, and it also is described with other languages that are more appropriate for certain peoples. I believe that Homer's language is an alchemical language.

My discourse on *secondary beauty* and on immortality is one that in substance is very similar to alchemy, even though it offers an alternative path that is comparable to an existential artistic one. This path is accessible to everyone and not to just an elect few. This is also true of the Odyssey.

Just as Jung unveiled the deeper meaning of alchemy, my goal is to do something similar by exploring the myth of Ulysses.

I have asked myself many times why Ulysses chose an assassin for a wife. That is exactly what she is, even though a legend has been created around her as being wise and faithful. The only difference between her and Clytemnestra lies in the fact that the latter manages to actually kill her husband Agamemnon, whereas Penelope does not succeed in doing so, even though her plan to have Ulysses and Telemachus murdered was ingenious.

I can answer this question in the following manner:

- Ulysses' mother was an assassin who tried to kill him when he was in the process of implanting in her uterus, because he was the fruit of a guilty action (see page 100). Trauma experienced during prenatal life always comes back during later life outside the womb, and must be faced and dealt with creatively.

Homer speaks of these attempts at abortion metaphorically, when he describes Ulysses' repeated failure to land on the island of the Phaeacians. He there describes all the abysmal pain that Ulysses still carries within himself

*But as soon as he got within a shout's distance,
he heard the roar of the sea against the rocks:
the swollen waves howled over the sand banks,
spitting fiercely: the seafoam covered everything.
... There were no safe ports for ships, no bays,
there were only sharp crags and rocks and cliffs.
"Woe is me, Zeus has let me glimpse the land I'd lost all hope for
after coming all the way through this abyss
but I see no way out of the frothy sea
only sharp rocks protrude with waves all around*

*that scream and roar and only one naked stone wall rises up out of them;
 and there the sea is deep, I cannot stand
 and walk my way out of this trouble.
 I'm afraid that I'd be thrown against the rocks as I tried to get out
 by the strong current gripping me: and then my efforts would be
 in vain.
 And if I swim further along, to see if I can find
 level beaches and inlets,
 I'm afraid the storm would pick me up again
 and drag me out to the fish-filled sea, screaming in agony,
 or that some god would send some huge monster against me
 from the abyss, just like the great numbers that glorious Amphitrite nurses:
 I know how much the great Enosichthon hates me..."*
*While he was thinking this in heart and soul,
 here came a huge wave that dragged him against the harsh coastline;
 where his skin would have been torn and his bones smashed,
 had blue-eyed Athena not whispered in his heart:
 and leaping he grabbed the rock with two hands,
 and he clung to it moaning, until the enormous wave receded.
 And thus he managed to avoid the wave; but again the undercurrent
 grabbed him violently and threw him far out to sea.
 Like when you pull an octopus out of its den,
 a thousand little stones are stuck to its tentacles,
 and this is how his brawny hands grasped the rock
 and had their skin pulled off: a huge surge submerged him.
 And poor Odysseo would have died despite his fate,
 had not blue-eyed Athena inspired him to be careful.
 When he came out from under the wave – while others still bashed against
 the shoreline – he swam along the coast, an eye always trained on land,
 looking for solid beaches and inlets.
 (Od.V, 400-440).*

- Having come face to face with death while still in the womb, Ulysses will have wondered for a long time about the meaning of life and why death exists. He will have felt a very intense desire to find a pathway to immortality.

Most certainly during the seven long years Ulysses spent on Calypso's island he will have reflected at length on these topics. When the goddess offers him immortality if he marries her, just as Circe did before, he politely refuses, because he already knows how to create immortality through his own efforts.

- No one can create immortal beauty until they have faced death and have transformed it into life.

By transforming a woman who is an assassin into a woman capable of loving, an authentic work of art is created, one that transforms death into life and hatred into love.

CHAPTER XI

THE BEAUTY OF LIFE

Now, let us put *secondary beauty* aside for a moment and concentrate on the “*beauty of life*”.

When I speak of the beauty of life, I am referring to the type of beauty that almost everyone receives while in the womb and that we generally manage to preserve during childhood.

Then, at least in the Western world, this beauty disappears. All around us, we see an ever-growing number of young people who are sad and anxious and who turn to alcohol and all kinds of drugs in ever-increasing numbers. Eventually they cannot live without them.

Sophia-analysis asserts that while it is true that we learn to appreciate the *beauty of life* while still in the womb, during this time this beauty already comes under attack by numerous traumatic experiences and a huge amount of hatred. We accumulate this trauma and hatred inside ourselves against those who were often involuntarily the cause of them, most often our parents.

The suffering caused by these traumas sometimes becomes evident at birth and sometimes it incubates for a period of time, skipping over childhood. It then explodes in all its violence and life becomes an *infernal labyrinth* that hides a frightening monster that continually devours us.

Freud calls this labyrinth the “*repetition compulsion*”.

Is there any hope to get out of this labyrinth?

Freud does not think there is, because according to his reasoning, Thanatos (the death instinct) is stronger than Eros (the life instinct) and Thanatos will always win in the end, since we are all destined to die.

Sophia-analysis, instead, believes that it is possible to break out of it and that the myth of Ulysses is an ironclad argument against Freud’s radical pessimism.

The main question that humanity faces is not the silly riddle that the Sphinx challenges Oedipus with but is rather this other: *who is willing to go through what Ulysses went through in the course of their own life?*

Ulysses' path is not a repetition compulsion, nor does he get lost in the labyrinth to wind up in the jaws of the monster, as often happens as a result of *repressed hatred or the will to vindicate oneself*. It is, instead, a path that goes through the labyrinth to once again experience all of the pain contained there, and untangle the hatred that lies below this pain. This can be accomplished with the constant help offered by Athena, that is, by one's own inner wisdom (see A.M. "Amore, libertà e colpa" {Love, Liberty and Guilt} Second Edition, Sophia University of Rome 2000).

By the time the journey is over, Ulysses manages to reconquer *lost beauty* (as Helen was brought home again). He is also able to not only have Penelope again (and thus reconquer the *beauty of life*) but to create with her a new type of beauty, a new relationship that can defy death forever.

At this point, many will find the question arises:

I once had the beauty of life but then I lost it and I can't seem to find it again; is there a way I can get it back?

(Here we are not talking about the search for lost time but of the search for lost beauty, because without it there is no pleasure in living).

I can respond to this question by saying that yes, a way does exist and it is the same one that Ulysses followed during his journey to return to Ithaca from Troy.

There is one substantial difference: during his prenatal experience, these traumas were for the most part perpetrated upon him and he mostly processed them in a passive way that was inadequate and incomplete.

During prenatal life, we all have to revert to massive defense mechanisms such as repression and splitting, to avoid being overwhelmed by pain or rage or the homicidal or suicidal drives that would have caused a spontaneous abortion.

We had to act with cunning and concentrate a year's time in the space of a month or a day so we could resist the temptation offered by the *seductive and devouring mother* and avoid winding up enmeshed with her for the rest of our lives.

It is as if we must freely make a profound decision to face today what we could not face then. We must be willing to process an overwhelming amount of seemingly infinite *pain* and a limitless amount of *hatred* towards oneself and everyone else; we must also deal with an immense amount of pleasure, which is a product of *intrauterine incest* and which can keep us imprisoned our whole lives and force us to be simply listless consumers of life.

CHAPTER XII

THE PERSONAL SELF AND THE COSMIC SELF

The *Personal SELF* is a center of wisdom found within every human being. It is a center of wisdom and of love that contains our purpose in life.

This purpose is in harmony with the *Cosmic SELF* and with Life.

The *Cosmic SELF* is the higher power that regulates the universe as a single living organism. In the *Odyssey*, Athena represents the *Personal SELF* and Zeus represents the *Cosmic SELF*.

The *Cosmic SELF* is like a deep, spiritual center that is at one with our being (both psychological and physical) and inhabits it in every part. It continuously works to keep all our parts integrated and unified, rather than letting us split up in opposing components.

It is like the human *I Person* that gives a purpose to life. This purpose is to elevate and improve the life that one has received, making it grow from an inferior dimension to ever-higher ones.

Just as the *I Person* is present in all the cells of the body, the *Cosmic SELF* is present in the *Personal SELF* of every single human being and from there radiates out to every cell.

For this reason in *The Theorems and Axioms of Cosmo-Art*, (published by the Sophia University of Rome, (S.U.R.), 2009) I wrote that every human being is a child of Life (that is the Mother), and of the Universe (that is the Father).

Life creates the *Cosmic SELF* of the universe that we belong to, and the *Cosmic SELF* assigns to each human being their *Personal SELF*.

The *Personal SELF* speaks to us from within, like the “daimon” that told Socrates what was right and wrong.

The *Cosmic SELF* speaks to us from outside ourselves and also from within. In fact, it is both within us, in the deepest part of ourselves, and outside of us. We are a part of it and within it we move and act, carrying out both our own individual purpose and its greater purpose.

Just as Telemachus makes a journey to encounter his father Ulysses, when he travels to Sparta inspired and helped by Athena (described in the first four Books of the *Odyssey*), Ulysses makes his own journey to encounter the *Cosmic SELF*, the Cosmic Father. Homer dedicates the other twenty books of his poem to this journey.

I have lived my life by maintaining a constant dialogue with my *Personal SELF* and this is how I have come to know of the existence of the *Cosmic SELF*.

Homer describes how Athena is in constant contact with Ulysses.

On the beach of Ithaca Athena tells Ulysses:

*whenever you face danger I am near you and I save you,
and I made all the Phaeacians love you.*

Now I have come to make plans with you – [against the Suitors]

(Od. XIII, 301-303)

Sometimes Athena's intervention is enough to help Ulysses and other times Athena goes to Zeus first so she can get the help Ulysses needs.

Zeus responds at least twice by sending the god Hermes: once when he must save Ulysses from the spells of Circe the enchantress, and another time when he must tell the goddess Calypso to let Ulysses leave her island.

It seems right to me to identify Athena with the *Personal SELF* and Zeus with the *Cosmic SELF*.

Zeus is powerful but he is not omnipotent and he also must keep in mind that Poseidon is hostile towards Ulysses.

Athena is not omnipotent either, and she cannot keep Ulysses from suffering *many woes* and from the pain that continually strikes Ulysses during his life.

When I ask myself why Zeus and Athena are so interested in Ulysses' life I can find only one answer: the *Cosmic SELF* and the *Personal SELF* have a specific purpose in mind and it is not only for Ulysses' good, it is for the good of the whole universe.

This purpose, as Cosmo-Art suggests, is the creation of *secondary beauty*, a beauty that never dies. Human beings need this beauty, and the whole universe, that is a single living organism, needs it to go from mortal life to immortal life.

Only the fusion of cosmic forces (divine forces) with human forces can fulfill this purpose.

Ulysses cannot fulfill it by himself, nor can Zeus and Athena.

Human life begins with biological birth and ends with biological death.

In the same way, the life of the universe began with the Big Bang and, very probably, will end with the implosion of a Big Crunch.

However, if during the interval between the birth and death of both humans and the universe, and whether it be long or short, humanity and the universe can create a new life form that is superior to biological life and superior to life as

regulated by the laws of physics, we will finally be able to see what the meaning of human life might actually be, as well as the meaning of life of the universe.

Most certainly, this happens during the lifetimes of those artists who have managed to create immortal works of art.

Now what must happen is to bring Art into the life of humanity, as a power that any human being can utilize in connection with the life of the cosmos.

Life has always evolved and has always created new life forms that did not exist previously. Thus, it can also happen that an immortal life form can be created from a mortal one. This is what happens when *secondary beauty* is created.

CHAPTER XIII

THE INTERNAL MONSTERS

Polyphemus the Cyclops

Ulysses and some of his companions go into the cave of Polyphemus, which is full of milk and cheeses. The cave is like a womb, rich with precious substances that nurture the development of a fetus. The cave of Polyphemus is dark, and it frightens Ulysses' companions, who beg him to take the food and get out as fast as possible.

Ulysses, instead, insists on staying until the Cyclops returns, believing that he will obey the rules sacred to the Greeks, which dictate that guests must be treated with the utmost hospitality.

Ulysses has no idea what to expect, but in his heart, he knows he wants to understand and re-experience what is buried in the unconscious memories of his intrauterine life. He knows he must do so to recover *lost beauty* and to be able to create *new beauty*. Unless we re-experience our traumas and all the pain they contain, in a dialectic and creative manner, we cannot do either the former or the latter. This is why his unconscious wisdom encourages him to get himself into a tragic situation, even though his companions warn him of its danger.

At this point, a monstrous giant with only one eye appears, who could care less about the laws laid down by Zeus, and begins to devour Ulysses' companions, two at a time.

By meeting Polyphemus, Ulysses encounters the *possessive and devouring mother* (who already resides in his *factual unconscious*, but he is unaware of this). This is the monster mother that wants to feed on her own children and devour their lives, sending them to their deaths instead of encouraging them to go forward into life. She has only one eye: she only sees her own needs and has neither consideration nor respect for her children.

There are an infinite number of types of *devouring mothers* and I have met many of them. Meeting them means meeting pain and the anguish of death.

*"Bear with me, heart, more atrocious pain
you suffered the day the undefeatable, crazy Cyclops ate
my happy companions".... (Od.XX, 18-20)*

so says Ulysses to himself when he sees that his maidservants have become lovers of the Suitors and “*his heart howled inside of him*” (*Od. XX, 13*) .

In Polyphemus’ cave, Ulysses’ first reaction (that arises from his *reactive unconscious*) is to take out his sword and strike Polyphemus to kill him. But his inner wisdom (that comes from his *Personal SELF*) immediately rises up and shows him that it would not be in his best interests to kill the monster, who, upon entering the cave, had rolled a huge boulder across the entrance that not even one hundred of his men could move.

If Ulysses kills Polyphemus, it would mean that he and his companions would die inside the cave because no one could save them. It is better that he calm his rage, regain his composure and use his *creative power* to find a better solution.

If while still in the uterus the *fetal I* responds to the monster mother with anger and hatred, the fetus, not the mother, will die. It is better to react with defense mechanisms and put off any possible vendetta into the future. For example at the time of birth, where many mothers die of complications that are created, in my opinion, by the baby’s need to vindicate itself. The baby presents wrongly at the uterine opening and thus destroys the mother. Another even better example is when life circumstances replicate the trauma experienced in utero, and the reactive response of the traumatized person can end up as homicide.

In Polyphemus’ cave, Ulysses decides (*the decisional unconscious and the deep decisional I Person*) to put his rage aside. He chooses not to get revenge and to use a different strategy. First, he gets the Cyclops drunk with excellent wine and then he blinds him in his only eye with a well-sharpened pole. They then escape from the cave by hiding under the bellies of the sheep (*Od. IX, 215-565*).

In the cave, Ulysses placates his rage but not his hatred. He only represses it. His repressed hatred re-emerges when Poseidon attacks Ulysses by setting off a violent storm when he is close to the island of the Phaeacians. By following the wise council that Athena whispers to him from within (*blue eyed Athena inspired his heart: Od. V, 427*), Ulysses manages to make a first step beyond his hatred and his wounded pride by praying to the river god, who answers his prayer and saves him from sure death. During his voyage by land, he arrives at the center of his being, and there he will manage to completely untangle his hatred and reach an ability to forgive.

Each one of us has our own cave of Polyphemus, and we either end up there blindly, or we are led by the wisdom of the *SELF*.

This is how we can learn to understand our past, our reactions and the healthy and unhealthy decisions we made at that time.

However, just as we were the ones (our *I Persons*) who made those decisions at that time (decisions that are always either based on love or hatred), we now can

listen to our inner wisdom, recognize those past decisions for what they are, and by changing them, we can forge a new identity.

Our past decisions make up our destiny; our new decisions transform our lives into a work of art that destroys the destiny we had previously created for ourselves.

CHAPTER XIV

THE LABYRINTH OF THE DEVOURING MOTHER

It won't be enough for Ulysses to encounter the *devouring mother* just once. With Polyphemus, Ulysses relived only a part of his rage and hatred and he still has a lot to work through and a lot of pain he must process. It will take many other encounters and new levels of processing.

Ulysses' journey by sea unwinds like a *labyrinth* that twists and turns from east to west and from north to south. At almost every turn of this labyrinth waits a monster that wants to devour Ulysses and his companions.

The anthropophagous Laestrygonians destroy eleven of Ulysses' twelve ships (*Od. X, 80-132*)

Scylla is a monster with six heads and twelve legs: it is right in front of Charybdis and it devours six of Ulysses' companions in one gulp. (*Od. XII, 223-259*)

The enchantress Circe transforms men into swine (*Od. X, 239*) and Calypso (*Od. V, 28-277*) would have never let Ulysses leave her island at the edge of the world if Zeus hadn't intervened on his behalf.

Finally, the Suitors devour Ulysses' riches, threaten his wife Penelope and wait for him to return so they can kill him. (*Od. XIV-XXII*)

It is important to understand how each of these passages is indispensable so that we go back into the abyss of our trauma and free ourselves of the danger it represents. In this manner, we can recover our best energies that can help us transform ourselves, learn how to find lost beauty, and create *secondary beauty*.

When we heal our intrauterine experience, we can recover the *beauty of life*; if we recover all our energy, we can face pain and death and transform them into a door towards a life that is a source of immortal beauty.

We must understand how Ulysses works to create *secondary beauty*. The decision to *actively* face his intrauterine trauma and to transform this dark part of himself is a substantial part of this effort.

Ulysses is the *man of many woes*, as Homer calls him many times (and again I repeat, he says it 59 times), because by deciding to re-enter his trauma he is overtaken by the anguish of death that plagues the human dimension. By facing

this immense pain, he is able to capture all the energy it contains and use it towards the creation of a type of beauty that can be called immortal because it has met and overcome death.

Those who go back to their trauma, also touch the infinite *rage and hatred* that it provoked in them, which their *fetal I* had immediately *repressed and denied*.

Repression and denial often return to the surface during adult life and when it does, the rage beneath must be placated with wisdom, and the hatred must be calmed with forgiveness. Otherwise, if both remain intact, they consume our best energies because we must either use them to maintain exhausting defense mechanisms that keep us from sudden explosions of rage and hatred, or to repeatedly attack ourselves, others and life (see Novecento, the protagonist in Tornatore's film "*The legend of the pianist on the ocean*", who chooses to blow up with the ship, and my Cosmo-Artistic interpretation of this movie in "*La nascita della Cosmo-Art*" {The birth of Cosmo-Art} p. 303-312 which is partially reprinted in the next chapter).

From this paper I am going to first extract a page that can be useful in understanding how repressed hatred forms, and how defense mechanisms are created.

"The *fetal I* is extremely sensitive. Any maternal attitude that is not respectful of the child and its personal dignity, or of its megalomaniac expectations, wound it deeply. The crime of *lèse-majesté* does not originate in the king's palace, it happens in the uterus. It has two principal components: on one hand there is the omnipotence of the *fetal I* and on the other there is the fetus' extreme fragility and powerlessness. Its omnipotence feeds its pride and its powerlessness feeds its hatred and vengeance.

I believe that the Bible story of the expulsion from earthly paradise is actually talking about this crime. The uterus is the earthly paradise that is, however, short-lived, not because Adam eats the apple, but because the mother mortally wounds her daughter or son. We must not forget that for millennia mothers have believed they have the right to make life and death decisions regarding their children. Every mother believes she can do to her children whatever she wants.

Ulysses' mother is possessive and absent, devouring and castrating. The only time Ulysses strays away from Ithaca, when he is an adolescent, a boar attacks him and rips open his thigh. Is this a coincidence? Then, when he is trying to return from Troy, how many monsters try to devour him?

Oedipus' mother is a mother who seduces her son and manipulates him to satisfy her own needs.

Novecento's mother is no doubt irresponsible and absent.

When trauma strikes the *fetal I*, pain invades the *I* like a storm on the sea. The *fetal I* cannot handle the devastating force of this pain; it must repress and encapsulate it somewhere. If it is capable of doing so it can survive, otherwise it is overwhelmed and dies. During adult life, the pain returns with extreme intensity and if the adult *I Person* is prepared to face it manages to work through it: otherwise, it goes crazy or dies.

If, during intrauterine life repression and separation from pain are successful, another problem becomes quickly evident: infinite rage and limitless hatred immediately rise up and squash the *fetal I*. Again, the only solution is to deny or repress this hatred. If the *fetal I* succeeds in doing so, it again can save its biological life, if not, death will occur (this is called spontaneous abortion).

Intracosmic life is the space where past trauma is recreated and where repressed and denied pain return in full force. What seems to us to be a catastrophe is, instead, quite often a quite fortunate event for us, because it allows us to find a new solution for our pain and repressed hatred. This time it can be a solution no longer based on defense mechanisms and it no longer has to force us to use our best energies simply to keep our hatred under control.

The second opportunity is when, after having recovered our best energies, we can now decide to use our pain as a potent motor to help us create something immortal – *secondary beauty* – instead of using it to continue to feel we are victims.

We must also consider that repression is never one hundred per cent successful and so the unconscious vindictive drive is always present. It remains undisturbed in the shadows and it poisons our existence. Not only are we unable to recognize its presence, but we often tend to justify it with thousands of various rationalizations.

Worse yet, no matter what, we live like Novecento, seated on a case of dynamite and we run the risk of blowing up without warning if we do not learn to recognize repressed hatred and find a way to resolve it.

We are always ready to complain indignantly that others' hatred offends us, but we never see our own. If we only could only understand that behind others' hatred lies our own hatred, which we act out by delegating it, we would have another precious tool to help us see what otherwise almost always remains invisible.

The difference between Ulysses on one hand and Oedipus and Novecento on the other lies in the fact that the latter act only on their wounded pride and their defense mechanisms; Ulysses instead is patient, humble and wise and thus he can face his troubled odyssey, go through the pain, resolve his hatred through forgiveness and finally reach Ithaca”

(see A.M. *La nascita della Cosmo-Art*”{ *The Birth of Cosmo-Art*}, Published by Sophia University of Rome, 2000, pp.311-312).

CHAPTER XV

REPRESSED HATRED, AN UNEXPLORED REALITY

“The legend of the pianist on the ocean”

Film by Giuseppe Tornatore

The following pages are from the commentary that I wrote inspired by this film, which was adapted from the book “Novecento” by A. Baricco. I believe they can be useful in exploring even more in depth the problem of repressed hatred and the goal of Cosmo-Art.

“This film, which is sumptuous and fascinating in many ways, has been deemed senseless by some critics and to me it lacks a soul. To understand it in Cosmo-Artistic terms, the metaphors that can help us are:

The ship as a uterus.

The uterus as the sea.

The ship as life within the uterus of the sea.

The dynamite used to blow up the ship as repressed hatred that can blow up our lives.

The ocean as the universe that we are navigating. But where are we going?

Since the beginning of the nineteen hundreds { novecento in Italian means nine hundred and refers to the century t.n.} it has become ever more common that the uterus we are born from is traumatizing rather than paradisiacal. Rejection, abandonment and repressed hatred have become our daily bread, and we must constantly live in the infernal chaos of the engine rooms rather than in the first class dance halls.

Is there a way, an art, that can help us go from the engine rooms to the dance halls?

Moreover, is there a way to disengage the dynamite of our *repressed hatred* so we don't blow up with the ship?

Existential Personalistic Anthropology and Cosmo-Art offer an affirmative answer to these questions. The art is in knowing how to create *secondary beauty*, that is the synthesis of many opposites and it is, above all, a synthesis of intrauterine life with intracosmic life.

It is extraordinary to see how the internal monsters we encountered during intrauterine life are perfectly reproduced in intracosmic life. This reproduction is

the result of our inner power, whose roots lie in the repressed hatred we developed during intrauterine life. It is there that our wounded pride, our will to power and our need for revenge all bond together and form a single unit that will constantly determine our lives, up until the time when our purpose of creating *secondary beauty* comes to save us. This purpose is the only thing that is strong enough to uproot pride and vindictiveness.

The director of this movie obviously is not aware of Cosmo-Art and he knows nothing about how intrauterine and intracosmic life can be woven together to plan a way to pass from one universe to the next.

This is why the solution he finds is only partial and remains inadequate. Novecento the pianist manages to improve his life with the art of music and to move up to first class, but at the end, he decides to blow up with the ship. All of the beauty that he has created through the years as a pianist ends up going up with him. How much can art alone solve in a person's life? And how much can the love we receive help us, if we do not free ourselves of the ancient hatred we carry within ourselves?

This story reminds me of the story of Oedipus, another child who was abandoned as a baby and who spends over twenty years of his life surrounded by much love and happiness in Corinth. But as soon as he leaves Corinth and arrives in Thebes, his life becomes a tragedy. Is this due to fate? No, we know well that this was due to the hatred he had *repressed since his intrauterine life* and that neither the oracle nor the most intelligent Oedipus nor Teiresias were able to resolve. His tragedy ended up being inevitable.

In the same way, for Danny Boodmann T.D. Lemon Novecento, his art and his exceptional talent, all the love he received from Thanks Danny, from the captain of the ship and the whole crew who had adopted him as their own son, ended up being worthless for him. The hatred he held inside was much greater than all the love he received, and in the end, it prevailed over all.

Cosmo-Art asserts that *one person alone cannot create secondary beauty*; it is always the result of the action of a group. It also asserts, as does Personalistic Anthropology, that if repressed hatred, and the need for revenge that goes along with it, is not dealt with and solved, no one can create any type of beauty that lasts.

There is a type of beauty that can be created by solitary artists, but it is only immortal within the time-space dimension of this universe. Novecento is loved and admired inside the ship but outside of it, he is completely unknown. The ship, with all of the music inside of it, is like the type of beauty found within this universe, but outside this universe, it is as if it doesn't even exist.

Secondary beauty proposed by Cosmo-Art is different. It aspires to a type of immortality that is capable of going from one universe to the next, and only many artists who come together and form a single living organism can create it. This group creates an energy field that is so unique and powerful that it completely frees itself from the universal gravitational field.

On Tornatore's ship, there are the rich who travel to overcome their boredom and there are the poor who journey to the new world, a world where they can improve their lives. A great HOPE and a great desire to take action drive them.

They want to get rich and to enrich Life.

America was the hope of the nineteen hundreds. And today?

Europe has become the hope of the poor from the third world, but what hope do the Europeans have? From what I can see, there is no hope at all concerning intrauterine life and to intracosmic and ultracosmic life.

Nocevento the pianist refuses to get off the ship that has become old and decrepit; he prefers to blow up with it. He has no more hope. In an interview, the director said that Novecento has to choose between his love for a woman and love for his music, and he chooses his music and for this reason, he does not get off the ship. I think that Novecento rejects life because he was rejected and he abandons life because he himself had been abandoned in a cardboard box.

I think the cardboard box became a steel box, which was the ship, and Novecento's vindictive drive consists in never leaving the latter, since he was abandoned in the former. This is why he starts coming down the stairs leading to land but then turns around and goes back. He of course is unaware of what he is doing, but what he says regarding his decision is very important.

"It's not what I saw, but what I didn't see that made me go back" says Novecento to his friend Max. Exactly. Moreover, he did not see what he should have seen: his *repressed hatred* and his drive to get revenge.

I believe that the uterus of a mother who does not want to have a child becomes worse than a cardboard box for the *fetal I*, and the *fetal I* can hardly wait to destroy its mother and itself along with her.

I believe that Novecento identified the ship with his mother's womb, and he is happy to blow it up, even though he will blow up along with it.

Haven't we done the same thing, by inventing the atomic bomb and holding on to thousands of nuclear warheads in all different parts of the world? There is a strong temptation to use them, and this temptation is what the nineteen hundreds will bequeath to future generations. The existence of many human beings is also ridden with mini atomic bombs, which continuously explode.

Not only does the artist in the movie not get off the boat, he won't let his music get off either. He makes only one record, and he won't allow anyone to listen to it; he would like to give it to the girl who inspired the music in him, but he is unable to do it, and even worse, instead of sending it to her by mail he smashes it into a million pieces and throws it in the garbage. If this isn't hatred, I don't know what is! But this is *repressed hatred*, and how many are capable of contacting it and recognizing it?

Repressed hatred is like dynamite. It is only a question of time. For a while, even for twenty years or more, it stays completely still like a crouching beast, but

at some point comes the day when a secret timer goes off and quickly counts down, and everything is blown to bits.

I don't like the fact that Novecento's music remains a gift only for a select few and not for all of humanity. Just think what would have happened if J.S. Bach had destroyed his musical masterpieces! (During the year of writing this, we are celebrating 250 years after his death, as he was born in Eisenach on March 21, 1685 and died in Leipzig, July 28, 1750).

Unfortunately, for Novecento his music is only the covering of a new womb that he hides inside of so he can avoid his pain and hatred and refuse to grow up and become a man. This way when the ship dies he dies along with it. His friend, who tries to convince him to save himself and create a new life, cannot comprehend his response.

What he says is that there is too much land and that he would not know how to handle it or how to transform it into music. What? Isn't the sea he has been sailing on greater than land? Maybe he can see its edges when he looks at it out of the portholes in the hold where he is hiding? Is this why he doesn't come out of the hold and doesn't go to play his music in the first and third class halls? These inconsistencies mask the presence of an unconscious drive for revenge.

His life has never left the cocoon of his *narcissistic I*, whose pride was mortally wounded. Because of this *I*, his life will end with him, and he will fail to fulfill the purpose he was to accomplish with it.

Life has been given to us not to go from one port to the next, back and forth like work animals, but to navigate from one universe to the next and from one invention to the next, until this higher purpose has not been accomplished.

When this universe will either explode or implode, it is still too early to tell which hypothesis will be correct; Life does not want to die along with it. It wants to become immortal and navigate towards another universe, and after that towards another one, into eternity.

Life does not want ferrymen like Charon or even like Beatrice. It wants creators and inventors that are capable of transforming the impossible and making it possible, by creating a type of beauty that neither time nor death can ever destroy.

It wants inventors that know how to create a synthesis between life and death and that know how to extract a new life form from that synthesis that no longer must experience death.

Life wants inventors that know how to get to the port of *secondary beauty* after leaving the port of *primary beauty*.

It wants artists that are different from the artists of the past. The artists of the past knew how to create an initial transformation from primary to *secondary beauty*, and in doing so, they opened the door to a dimension that was previously unknown in the world. Nevertheless, this transformation is not enough so that Life can go from one universe to another.

Another type of art is necessary, and maybe Cosmo-Art is the right kind, that can help us achieve the goal, dreamed of for millennia, of Life's immortality.

We are not talking about the immortality of the *global I*, nor of the soul's immortality as invented by Socrates and Plato, where the body is only a prison that we must free ourselves of.

The *I* as we know it must die, not just once but many times. From its life and death experienced through its connection with its body, a field of energy must be formed that is so powerful that it can overcome universal gravity, the limitations of biological life and those of cultural and spiritual life.

The *global I* must die so the *I* of the artist can leave the body and incarnate in the immortal work of art. It is the work of art, then, that becomes its body, and it is no longer mortal.

My *I* must die and incarnate in the central nucleus of *secondary beauty*, by flowing together with the *I*'s of others.

In this manner, the energy field that has reached a new identity and a new substance while being created can freely expand into parallel and concentric universes, without having to die.

And so Life that was before eternal but was not immortal (*eternal*, because it has always existed and created billions and billions of life forms, but not *immortal*, because all of these life forms are mortal and they all must pass through death so they can perpetuate themselves into other forms of life) now can become *both eternal and immortal*. This is its dream and its goal and it always has been, and it will not find peace until it has reached it.

.... "the myth of Cosmo-Art comes from the dream that Life carries within itself. This dream is what the myth of Cosmo-Art wants to transform into reality.

Beauty, of the kind that artists have created throughout the history of art, is immortal within the time-space dimension of this universe, but it will never be able to pass into the time-space dimension of other universes. Every work of art has a spiritual soul that is connected to a material support, and every material support will perish when this universe does. In any case, and this is what is most important here, artistic beauty does not have the power to untangle anyone's *repressed hatred*.

There is no doubt that works of art contain energy, just as ideas contain energy, but they are two different types of energy that are completely different from each other. No one has yet studied what the energy consists of that emanates from a work of art. It is an energy that never runs out.

Today we know that an atom's energy contains terrible power, and we know that this energy burns out at some point. However, we do not know everything yet.

Tomorrow we could find out how much destructive power the human *I* is capable of and how great the destructive energy is that is condensed in *repressed hatred*.

One day, we could also end up understanding the energy contained in the *I* of an artist, and also the energy that can be concentrated in the *Choral SELF* of Cosmo-Art, or in any other group. We just might become capable of learning exactly what this energy is, that condenses in *secondary beauty* and never runs out.

It does not matter if we are only at the very first steps of this new art. What does matter is that we cultivate the myth of Cosmo-Art by condensing all the energy we have in it, even though we are not yet fully aware of exactly what it is that we are dealing with.

.....

In the movie, the emigrants have hope but the pianist has none at all.

How can someone watching this movie, who is looking for hope, identify with the pianist if he or she does not want to identify with the emigrants?

If you reflect closely on this you will realize that Tornatore's pianist is full of a pessimism and a cynicism that is completely in contrast with the hope of the poor who are crossing the ocean to build their lives in a new world.

There is a death wish in the pianist that the others do not have. The pianist is full of creativity but it dissolves into nothingness, whereas the others' creativity is not stopped by any obstacle.

These immigrants, whom today have become the capitalists of the New Economy, have given rise to the next evolutionary phase of the human species. We would be blind not to see it.

But as far as I am concerned, being a European who has not emigrated, I would like that yet another evolutionary phase could emerge from our Europe that is mostly de-Christianized, but is still full of infinite potential:, a phase that involves a new way of creating art and a new way of creating *secondary beauty*.

This is why we Cosmo-Artists want to leave the womb. We want to be born and we want to become artists of our lives and artists of the life of the universe. We do not want to remain stuck within the womb nor do we want to blow up with the ship, like Novecento. However, it is indispensable that we learn how to process our *repressed hatred* that is what mostly keeps us bound to it.

Just as gravity keeps all the celestial bodies in orbit around each other, repressed hatred is the gravitational field that keeps people bound to the maternal womb for much longer than even love can bind them.

The Ulysseans have chosen Ulysses as a model, and Ulysses did not stay long in the cave of Polyphemos or in the cave of Circe or Calypso.

Ulysses sailed all over the sea but he learned to process his *repressed hatred* by making it become manifest and by facing all the monsters that he met during

his journey. He forgave Helen and he saved her life; he forgave Circe and Calypso; he forgave his companions and he forgave Penelope, with her heart of stone.

But whom did Novecento forgive?

Did he ever try to find his mother? He did everything on his own, just like he learned to play the piano on his own. What does he need the others for? He is an Absolute.

We do not want to smash the beauty that life has given us into pieces, as he does. We want to create a new type of beauty with which we can travel from one universe to another and not just from one port to another.

Is it easy to do so? No, it is extremely difficult. It is even impossible for a mind that reasons only technologically. It is not impossible for a visionary mind like the ones that artists and poets had in the past. We cannot take as role models the artists of today, because they have mostly decided to smash already existing beauty, since they are incapable of creating beauty that does not yet exist.

We must also change the scene of the musical duel that takes place between Novecento and Jelly Roll Morton, which seems like a fight to the death between Far West gunslingers. The pianist's cynicism appears clearly during this duel. He tells his friend Max Tooney that Morton is very good, that his music is moving and he does not want to compete with him. Then, he suddenly changes his mind and becomes absolutely heartless. At the third round, he humiliates him; he pounds him into the ground and destroys him in front of all those who had so admired him. Morton locks himself up in his cabin and doesn't come out again.

It does not take much talent to kill others. However, it takes a lot of it to build harmony with others, to form a single living organism. This is a more difficult work of art to create, and very few know how to do it.

We must concentrate our talents and our energies on this type of art if we want to introduce something truly new to the world.

Life must not be a duel to the death and for death.

Death and life must blend so that a superior life form can emerge from this synthesis.

When, in October of 1994, a bullet killed the little seven-year-old American Nicholas Green while he was traveling with his family in Italy, a potent vibration of new energy and new life shook the whole planet. After this tragedy, organ donation accelerated throughout all the continents, saving thousands of human lives (see Reg Green, "The Gift that Heals: Stories of Hope, Renewal and Transformation").

Here death and life melded together and a new world consciousness arose that unites thousands of people of every race and every country throughout the planet.

In the immense pain of two parents, life and death met and fused together, and from this fusion new hope and a new vision were created that everyone could benefit from.

They did not react by being victims; they expressed neither hatred nor any need for revenge. They expressed life as a gift and life as a work of art.

I wish I could say the same thing for our lives. It all depends on us. Every day life puts us to the test and we can learn how to live with gratitude and art, instead of with anger and violence.

In the meantime, let's develop our imagination and learn to create our own legend and our own myth. Let's change the storyline in this movie: it is not true, as the director says, that it's a nice story; it's a horrible story.

We want to leave the womb and we want to step on to land. No bird can ever fly if it doesn't have feet and cannot stand somewhere on land.

We don't just want to be born, we want to learn to fly like birds, and even better than the birds.

In this book, I have put the spirit and the matter of Tornatore's story together so they begin to macerate: now you can resurrect them by transforming them.

Through the passion and the death of matter, the spirit goes through passion and death as well, and when the spirit rises up again transformed, matter, too, rises up transformed.

This dual process is present in every authentic work of art and it presides over the creation of any real work of art. Sometimes this happens in a visible manner, but it more often happens in an invisible way, above all for those who know nothing of the artist's toil and labour.

In J.S. Bach's "Passion according to Matthew", an appreciative listener can perceive and intuitively understand the process as a whole as well as all the single steps of the process. If one is in love with this music the process becomes visible.

When you receive this booklet, get to work on creating a new storyline for the film. The Cosmo-Art group is already working on one, but during the laboratory, you can all create one together".

(see A.M. "La nascita della Cosmo-Art" {The Birth of Cosmo-Art}, Published by The Sophia University of Rome, (S.U.R.) 2000, pp.303-312)

I will return to discuss further repressed hatred and how oppressive its presence is in Ulysses' life.

CHAPTER XVI

CIRCE, CALYPSO AND IMMORTALITY

Both the enchantress Circe and the nymph Calypso, two of the goddesses that fall in love with Ulysses, promise they will make him immortal if he marries them. Ulysses, however, refuses to obtain immortality in this way. This makes of him an unprecedented hero in the Greek world; he becomes a hero who is equaled by none and who is unlike any other hero in world literature.

Ulysses says to Calypso: I know you are immensely more beautiful than Penelope, but I know that I can create a higher form of beauty if I manage to transform Penelope's "*heart of stone*" so she can become a woman capable of loving a man for her whole life, capable of melding her feminine side with her masculine one, capable of combining her will with mine, capable of blending the will of the *I* with that of the Other in a single will. If I can do this, I can create *secondary beauty*, immortal beauty.

In this answer Ulysses puts two different conceptions of beauty in front of each other: one refers to physical beauty, which Calypso has more of compared to Penelope; the other refers to a beauty that does not yet exist but that Ulysses wants to create by returning to Ithaca and initiating a fusion of opposites between himself and Penelope.

This answer also contains the deep choice Ulysses is making towards Penelope as his wife and the radical decision to embrace the cosmic goal of creating *secondary beauty* together with her.

This choice is so radical that after Calypso tells him of the pain he will still have to undergo should he decide to leave:

*But if only you knew how much suffering
awaits you, before you reach your homeland,
staying here with me, you could share my home
and become immortal, even though you are so anxious
to see your bride again, whom you call out for every day."* (Od. V, 206-210)

Ulysses responds:

*If still some one of the gods will wish to torment me on the stormy sea,
I will tolerate it, because my heart is used to suffering.
I have suffered immensely, I have faced many dangers
between the waves and in war: after all that, may this come to pass as well!"*
(Od. V. 221-224)

It does not matter to Ulysses how much he will have to suffer so he can see his long-desired spouse. His is a *heart that is used to suffering* and even though he has faced many dangers, he is willing to face yet others, but he will not give up his project.

How many people can say as much?

Who wouldn't be afraid to have to suffer again, knowing how much they have already suffered in the past?

During his long stay on Calypso's island, Ulysses has plenty of time to meditate and reflect on the meaning of life. He carefully recalls his descent into Hades, which was possible because of Circe's indispensable help, and he understands the illusion that devours those who run after power and glory.

This is where Ulysses understands the meaning of the Universe, and the cosmic project that it entrusts to men and women.

Some of the words that I earlier attributed to Ulysses are not the exact words Homer uses. It is I who describe them in this way because I am convinced, after long reflection, that Ulysses' strategy to become immortal is as follows: after having accomplished the fusion between the *I* and the *SELF* (Ulysses and Athena), he wants to accomplish the *fusion between the I and a You*, even when the *You* represented by Penelope strongly resists. She, in fact, does not want to make any decisions to recognize and love Ulysses, as she is still attached to her childhood, her expectations, and the maternal element that devours her life (the Suitors).

Ulysses falls madly in love with Circe and stays in her house one year, and he stays with Calypso for seven years, making love with her the whole time.

During the last years, though, Ulysses makes love with the goddess in her bed at night, where by day he sits on the seashore and cries the whole time because he is not free to continue his voyage home to Ithaca. This had not happened with Circe.

*There on the island he lies, suffering great pain,
in the home of the nymph Calypso, who keeps him there
by force. (Od. V, 13-15)*

*But generous Odysseus was not to be found inside (by Hermes);
he was sitting on the promontory, crying, just like always,
with tears, moans and suffering lacerating his heart,
and he looked tiredly at the sea, letting his tears fall.
(Od. V, 81-84)*

No *primary beauty*, not even if of divine origin, can satiate a person's heart. We will always feel an internal torment that will push us to find a superior beauty that we can create ourselves.

CHAPTER XVII

THE SIRENS AND INTRAUTERINE INCEST

Is there another reason why Ulysses must spend so much time with Calypso?

Yes. This, too, is the return of a past experience that we will call “intrauterine incest” (see Francesco Sollai, Cosmo-Artistic interpretation of the film “The Shawshank Redemption” in “*La nascita della Cosmo-Art*” {The Birth of Cosmo-Art}). This is the most terrible weapon a mother uses to seduce her son and take over his life forever. Unfortunately, the son allows himself to be seduced with great pleasure and a great sense of complicity.

The same thing happens to daughters, and director Jane Campion, in her film “*The Piano*”, gives us a beautiful demonstration of this (see the Sophiartistic interpretation of this film in A.M. “*La vita come opera d’arte e la vita come dono spiegata in 41 film*” {Life as a Work of Art and Life as a Gift explained in 41 films} , Published by Sophia University of Rome, (S.U.R.) Rome, 1995).

When in the proem Athena begs Zeus to free Ulysses from Calypso, she describes the nymph’s actions as follows:

***and always with tender, seductive words
she enchants him, so he will forget Ithaca*** (Od. I, 56-57)

Before a child encounters the *devouring mother*, he encounters the *seductive mother* and the *castrating mother*. The Jungian analyst E. Neuman introduced the concept of the devouring mother, and the Freudian analyst Fairbairn introduced the concepts of the seductive mother and the castrating mother.

In the Odyssey, the enchantress Circe, Calypso and the Sirens are all representations of this mother that first seduces and then castrates her son.

Ulysses, though, knows how to defend himself from Circe and from the Sirens and knows how to transform both Circe and Calypso so they act in his favor.

Circe, whom Ulysses manages to tame, gives him all the esoteric knowledge that she possesses and she shows him the way to go in to Hades and meet the soothsayer Teiresias, and get out again. Then she warns him of the Sirens and tells him the best way to face Scylla and Charybdis.

Calypso, when she finally decides to let Ulysses go, first teaches him how to build himself a raft and then, even more importantly, she teaches him the art of sailing by night and how to use the stars as a guide.

(see A.M. “Rules for Nocturnal Navigation”, chapter XIV of *The Ulysseans*, published by the Sophia University of Rome, 2009)

Inside the uterus, a fetus has very few ways of being able to defend itself from its mother. She is its primary love object, its absolute love object, that does not yet have a face but that most certainly has a sweet voice, much sweeter than even the Sirens’ voices. The child remains charmed by it and entrapped forever.

The song she sings is clearly one without words, just as the Sirens’ song is one without words. It makes no sense to try to understand what the Sirens are singing, as many have done from ancient times until today.

Only the laws of biological growth manage to detach the child from its love object and send it off to the neck of the uterus so it can be born.

Very often, however, these births are completed only on a physiological level, because the *fetal I* that continues to survive well into adulthood is still in the womb, fused and enmeshed with its primary love object. The *adult I* will have to face terrible battles so it can emerge and be born, and conquer the freedom to detach from its primary love object and turn to another love object that is truly different from the first, not merely a substitute for it.

We can often conquer this freedom by surrendering to the need to return to the womb through regression, and deciding to re-live the original experience registered in our cellular memory and in our *fetal I*, by *projecting* it on substitute maternal figures.

By actively reliving this archaic experience, the *adult I* can find the freedom and the strength it needs to definitively detach from its first love object and from its incestuous relationship with the mother.

This is the only way one can truly love another person.

A mother who does not want her son to be free will try to castrate him. Either she will not give herself to him completely, or she will hold on to her power of life or death over him. One of the most effective ways a mother can castrate her children is by taking possession of their lives.

When Ulysses follows the god Hermes’ advice and goes into Circe’s house, he threatens her with his sword and makes her solemnly swear that she will no longer dare cast spells either on himself, or on his companions. (*Od. X, 321-347*)

In the passage from the pre-Oedipal phase to the Oedipal phase, the power relationship between mother and son is reversed, if the *Global I* decides to make the passage.

First of all, the mother possesses her son, then the son possesses his mother.

Homer says that this is possible with the help of Hermes and of the *moly* herb, that only the gods are able to extract from the earth.

What do this god and the *moly* herb symbolize? They most certainly represent the decision to grow up and the type of courage that one needs to be able to do so.

*And while I was walking through the sacred valleys
of Circe who knows many potions, I was about to reach her palace,
when Hermes with his golden wand came to me,
while I was reaching the house, he seemed like a young hero,
whose first beard is sprouting in all his youthful beauty.
He took my hand and spoke to me, saying:
“Where are you going among these hills all alone,
without knowing the area? Your companions are in Circe’s house
locked up as swine in solid stalls.
And you have come to free them? I tell you
that you will not return either, but you’ll be captured with the others.
Here, I want to keep you free and save you from danger.
Take this good herb and go into Circe’s house;
its power will save you from harm.
I will also tell you of all of Circe’s evil spells.
She will make a mixture and put poison in it;
but she won’t be able to cast a spell on you,
the herb I am about to give you will protect you, and now listen to me:
when Circe will strike you with her long wand,
unsheath your sharp sword
and jump on Circe as if you want to kill her:
frightened, she will invite you to her bed.
So don’t reject the love of a goddess,
because she will liberate your companions and will let you go;
while with her tell her to make a solemn oath,
that she will not cast any evil spell on you
or make you **weak and powerless** while you are naked and
vulnerable. (Od. X, 275-301)*

Having taken away the power of life and death from the mother, now Ulysses can fully enjoy the possession of his love object, and when it is time, he will be able to easily detach himself from her and grow up in complete freedom.

The same thing happens when he re-lives his *intrauterine incest* with Calypso the nymph. He gives himself all the time he needs. When he is ready to detach himself, the god Hermes arrives and helps Ulysses save himself.

Hermes’ appearance, which is Athena asks for and then Zeus orders, is only a symbol of the profound transformation that Ulysses goes through inside himself, with the help of the *Personal SELF* and the *Cosmic SELF*.

Many women make their men become “weak and impotent”, either by being seductive or by stubbornly going against them, and fighting them with all the weapons they possess.

It is not necessary to run into Circe to be reduced to swine, lions, wolves and the other animals that are all powerless, and stuck in the goddess' house. (Od. X, 431-433)

These are every day occurrences, because often men remain imprisoned by their maternal imago that makes them weak and impotent. Nor do they care about learning to contact their *Personal SELF* and their *Cosmic SELF*.

We have used two different ways of interpreting the same event: the love story between Ulysses and Circe and the one between Ulysses and Calypso.

The first interpretation: no *primary beauty* can truly satisfy a man.

The second: it is possible to satisfy a need that was not fulfilled during intrauterine life, and continue the journey towards maturity later on.

Both are essential in understanding our deepest truths, which have two levels of depth and not just one.

The second interpretation helps us reconquer *lost beauty* and the first helps push us towards the goal of *secondary beauty*.

CHAPTER XVIII

ULYSSES AND THE IMPACT WITH SCYLLA

The impact with Scylla comes unexpectedly and it only lasts a few seconds.

Circe had warned Ulysses what would happen, and she had advised him not to use his sword, because it would have been useless.

Ulysses did not listen to any of Circe's warnings, even though he knew the goddess was telling him the truth and he had already had proof of this in his encounter with the Sirens.

I believe that those who have an *arrogant heart*, and Ulysses is still full of hybris, will often find themselves in situations that are similar to the one Ulysses faces. Situations that are either difficult to handle or that are handled irresponsibly.

Oedipus, too, has an *arrogant heart* and when he learns his future from the oracle, he acts like a fool who thinks he can solve his problems simply by leaving the house where his supposed parents live.

Later, when he becomes king of Thebes and he meets Teireisias, he treats him with an attitude that belies his *arrogant heart* and he doesn't listen to anyone. He doesn't listen to Teireisias and he doesn't listen to his mother Jocasta, who begs him not to insist on looking for the truth. Oedipus does not stop and the only thing Jocasta can do is to hang herself. So it is that Oedipus, with his excuse that he is looking for the truth, manages to carry out his vendetta, animated by his repressed hatred towards his mother who manipulated him all his life, from the time of his conception onward.

The only way any of us can save ourselves from the kind of destructive behavior that leaps out of our unconscious when least we expect it, is to work constantly on transforming our *arrogant heart* into a *humble heart*.

We cannot face this process unless we find a good teacher to help us go through it.

If there are no good teachers available, we always have our *SELF*, our inner teacher. I have said this many times.

Having received the terrible humiliation that Scylla inflicts on him, Ulysses can react in two ways:

- A) center himself on his *SELF* and on his inner wisdom and discover the positive aspects of what he has gone through. How can he do that? By being able to recognize his hybris and by asking his pride to bow its head and humbly accept its impotence.
- B) refuse to bend his pride and to swear angrily against an unkind destiny.

The first reaction comes from a decision to love himself, despite his defeat.

The second reaction is a reaction based on hatred that immediately becomes a decision based on hatred, against himself and against life.

Many schools of wisdom tell us that humbly accepting our powerlessness is the best weapon we have to acquire true power.

“The power to accept one’s powerlessness is the greatest power a person can acquire”.

The ability to transform the humiliation of impotence into a full acceptance of impotence is profound wisdom.

This path is a sure way to gradually transform an *arrogant heart* into a *humble heart*. This is what Homer shows us in Ulysses’ journey through his transformation.

In many movies directors (who are the modern storytellers of our society) show us how first the hero is captured and rendered powerless and they show us how the hero is capable of accepting the situation and of finding a way to transform their impotence into true power, that they then can use to defeat their adversary.

CHAPTER XIX

ULYSSES AS A TEACHER OF LIFE AND OF WISDOM

Homer created the poem the *Odyssey* in almost the same period that the Bible was written in the West and the teachings of Buddha were put into writing in the East.

This means it was written between the sixth and seventh century B.C.E.

I do not believe that this is just a coincidence.

I believe that the *Cosmic SELF*, the superior intelligence that governs the world, manifests itself in various parts of globe and inspires poets and prophets, leaving to the identity and creativity of each culture the freedom to organize and develop the inspiration they have received.

Homer was not a prophet, he was a poet. The Hindus who created the sacred texts of the Upanishad were also poets.

A poet is not a historian and he or she can mix historical facts with imaginary ones and with myths.

The goal of every poet is to represent their own inner world and their perception of history and of spirituality as it exists during the time in which they live.

Poets rearrange the world according to their own inner vision and this is how they create the “poetic truth” they then offer to their readers, whether they be from their own time or from any time after them.

This is what Dante did in his “*Divine Comedy*”, where with absolute liberty he mixed historical fact with imaginary ideas and mythology, so he could speak to us of his inner vision of life and of his own personal interpretation of the religion of his time.

The God of the Bible is a forgiving one, but he is also punishing and vengeful.

In the teachings of Buddha, there is no God and what is taught is the road to enlightenment.

Homer in his poems speaks of the many gods and of Zeus, who is the father of all the gods who live on Mount Olympus.

We do not know what relationship there is between the God of the Hebrews and beauty. It is not mentioned.

We do not know what Buddhist thought says about the search for beauty. Wisdom is mentioned, but beauty is not.

We do know that Zeus is not satisfied with the mere beauty that he sees in the various gods, and we know he often comes down to Earth to indulge in the beauty of many young women, by using either cunning or violence.

We must acknowledge that western and eastern thought are very different. The search for harmony, more than beauty, is very important in the Eastern tradition.

While the Bible and the books of Buddha speak of religious teachings that over time became sacred texts, Homer's poems are not religious texts, they are not sacred to anyone.

They are books in poetic form, and even today millions of people appreciate them. They are, however, also books of wisdom, just as the Buddhist texts and the Bible are. I consider my hypotheses as a way to interpret Homer's books so their wisdom can be understood.

The fact that Homer's poems are books of wisdom was something all the ancient commentators recognized. I am not the first to assert this, and not long ago, Harold Bloom, one of the greatest American literary critics, said this in his most recently published book in Italian, entitled "La saggezza dei libri" ed Rizzoli, 2004 {Where Shall Wisdom Be Found? New York: 2004}. He refers, however, mostly to the Iliad, and I want to mainly explore the Odyssey.

I want to do so by exploring some lines of interpretation that are in harmony with the ideas of Cosmo-Art, and specifically I want to:

- explore the relationship between Ulysses and Athena to describe how the fusion of the *I* and the *SELF* can be accomplished;
- explore the relationship between Ulysses and Penelope to describe how to accomplish the fusion between the *I* and the *You*;
- explore the relationship between Ulysses and Telemachus to describe how the fusion between the *I* and the Cosmos and the *I* and Others can be accomplished;
- explore the relationship that exists among the internal components of the *Global I*.

These syntheses are, on one hand, an antidote that is necessary to become free of the internal monsters and the five poisons as described both by Buddha and Homer, and, on the other, they are fundamental goals in the alchemical transformation of the *I*.

Ulysses creates a synthesis between the *I* and the Cosmos as he reaches an ever greater awareness of the close relationship there is between intrauterine and intra-cosmic life, along with an ever greater ability to create a lasting "concordance" between the *I* and the *SELF*, the *I* and the *YOU*, the *I* and *Others*, the conscious *I* and the unconscious one. (On this theme regarding the synthesis of the *I* with the Cosmos see the Cosmo-Artistic interpretation of the film "The legend of Bagger Vance" by Fatma Pitzalis and Luigi Atella, published in "*I Laboratori Corali di Cosmo-Art*", {The Cosmo-

Art Group Laboratories} published by the Sophia University of Rome (S.U.R.), Roma 2006).

Ulysses creates the fusion between the *I* and the Cosmos as he gradually understands and embraces ever more the cosmic goal of creating *Secondary Beauty*, and in this sense he is a teacher of life and wisdom.

CHAPTER XX

THE STRUCTURE OF THE GLOBAL I

I would now like to look at the relationship between the *I* and its various conscious and unconscious components.

The human *Global I* is made up of a complex structure that we still know very little about.

The little that I know about it, beyond what Freud, Jung and Reich have already said, I described in my book: "*Theory of the Person and Existential Personalistic Anthropology*" (published by Sophia University of Rome, 2009)..

There I speak of an *I Person*, a *Corporeal I*, a *Psychological I* and a *Transcendental I* or *Personal SELF* that I consider as the center of wisdom found in every human being, from the moment of their conception on.

Each one of the components of the *I* belongs to a single, unique central subject that I call the *I Person*. The *I Person* is what makes conscious decisions that it is completely responsible for, even though it is more or less influenced by the other components of the *Global I*. But there is also an unconscious *I Person* that makes important decisions.

Each one of these components acts according to its own logic that is at times completely different from the logic of the other components.

All the decisions that the *I Person* makes are decisions based on either love or hatred, towards itself, towards others and towards Life.

Even those decisions that at first sight are not clear can eventually be seen as decisions based on love or decisions based on hatred.

Human actions are not as simple as we would wish they were. Often times, within the same decision, within the same action, motivations and ways of thinking that are completely opposite can blend and it is not always possible to understand all of them and to distinguish them.

For example, how do we know when a decision made based on a desire for justice is only a question of justice and not also a desire for revenge? Often it is impossible to separate justice from revenge.

Years ago I formulated this principle:

"Just as an infinite number of lines that are completely opposite from each other pass through a single point, an infinite number of motives that are completely opposite from each other pass through every human action."

It is not easy to accept this principle, because it requires a lot of humility, a lot of courage and a lot of inner honesty.

When these virtues are absent then a situation that I call the “existential lie” of the *Global I* is created. The *existential lie* becomes a part of the *I* that lies to itself without knowing it is lying. In Shakespeare’s Hamlet we have an excellent example of this with the king and the queen that judge Hamlet’s crazy behaviour and don’t realize that they themselves are assassins.

A person can spend their whole life immersed in the *existential lie* and not know it. They might realize it when they are on their death bed, as happens in Almodovar’s film “*High Heels*”, when the protagonist’s mother confesses to the priest and what she sees as truth he sees as a lie and vice-versa.

Sartre is even more severe than I am and he accuses the *I* not of lying without knowing it but of lying and not wanting to admit that it is lying. He calls this “bad conscience”.

In this case what the *I* says to itself or to others is full of obvious contradictions. Truth and lies are mixed together so as to be practically inseparable.

Homer gives us a clear example of one of Ulysses’ existential lies when he recounts how Ulysses, after returning to Aeolus after his companions open the bag of winds, blames first a sleepiness that came suddenly over him, then blames his mad companions and finally bad luck, but he never blames himself (v. Od. X,19-79).

Aeolus briskly sends Ulysses away after hearing this irresponsible story, telling him that he does not want to help someone whom the gods are against.

But even this is one of the many lies that Ulysses tells throughout the Odyssey and it is a lie that is different from the others, because this time he does not want to admit that he is lying, for example when he lies to Athena when he is in Ithaca because he doesn’t want her to recognize him.

Aeolus accuses him of being irresponsible but Ulysses does not want to admit this or own up to it.

I know this is true because I know that Ulysses could have immediately told his companions what the bag contained, but he didn’t do so. Ulysses could have avoided staying at the tiller for nine days and nine nights straight without any relief but he didn’t do that either.

Only he is responsible for these two decisions.

We could say that Ulysses wanted the honor of reaching Ithaca as soon as possible, but this does not justify his actions.

In chapter XXII I discuss how Ulysses was envious and how convenient it is for him to displace his envy on to his companions and not recognize it as being inside of himself.

Here we see how the logic of Ulysses' prideful *I* conflicts with his own wisdom, which he demonstrates so eloquently in other parts of the poem. We can also see how one way of thinking overwhelms the other and creates dire consequences.

I do think, however, that when Ulysses is meditating on whether or not to throw himself into the sea and drown, he is finally seeing his responsibility.

If we analyze in the same manner Ulysses' decision to stay in Polyphemus' cave against the will of his companions, we can see two ways of reasoning that are completely opposite.

One is the reasoning of the *fetal I*, that was devoured by the mother in the womb, and that still loves to be devoured (*repetition compulsion* as Freud would call it). The other is the reasoning of Ulysses' unconscious *I Person*, which experienced trauma that it has no conscious memory of, but wants to bring what is unconscious into consciousness. By doing so he can better understand himself and eventually transform himself, and this is the highest type of wisdom.

How can we break our complicity with the devouring mother if we don't first become aware that it exists?

By repeating the same type of situations over and over again perhaps we are stuck in repetition compulsion, but it could also be an attempt by the *adult I* to make the passage from total powerlessness before the mother to a real power, so as to destroy the devouring mother and the *I*'s own complicity with her (the Suitors must be destroyed and Homer speaks of this constantly throughout the whole poem, from the beginning to the end).

One example of complete powerlessness is when Ulysses runs into the Lestrygonians, who devour the crews from eleven of his ships. Another example can be seen when Ulysses is suddenly attacked by Scylla, even though Circe had warned him about it, and loses six of his companions all at once.

An example of true power is when Ulysses exterminates the Suitors, who have been devouring his goods and courting his wife, with the help of Athena. Telemachus, Eumeus and Philoetius.

We can also see his power when, with Hermes' help, Ulysses manages to get Circe to succumb to his will and he convinces her to restore his companions to human form.

Instead with Calypso, first of all Ulysses' *fetal I* has complete control over his *adult I*, anchored as it is to the seductive pleasure of intrauterine incest. It forces him to accept seven years of being imprisoned on her island, but slowly his *adult I* takes control over his *fetal I* and its complicity with the seductive and castrating

mother. By doing so he finally manages to transform Calypso and get her to free him so he can leave for Ithaca.

We cannot understand Ulysses very well if we don't develop our knowledge of the *Global I* and its components, and the various motivations and ways of reasoning that are layered on top of each other.

This knowledge brings us to a deeper understanding of how necessary a dialectical approach is, which allows the *I* to learn and accept responsibility if it wants to have control over its life and transform it into a work of art.

A dialectical approach means knowing how, on one hand, to surrender to the expectations of the *fetal I* and on the other to know how to dismantle them when the time is right. This is what allows a person to become free, truly in control of their own life.

The fact that Ulysses stays with Circe for a year seems very similar to what Herman Hesse describes in his *Siddhartha*, where Siddhartha goes for a certain time to stay with a courtesan. He must do so before he can pass to a higher level along his spiritual path.

In my opinion, Ulysses was amply castrated by his mother Anticlea, which makes it impossible for him to free himself of the maternal imago and become a man capable of loving a woman. First he must re-establish contact with his sexual drives and learn to extract from them all the positive energy they contain.

We can not fly towards the spiritual dimension if we don't first come into contact with our animalistic instincts and learn to transform them.

The Christian ascetics do not agree with this theory but I prefer Indian wisdom and the wisdom of Homer when dealing with this subject. They seem to me to be the only true antidote to the hypocrisy people must live with when they dedicate themselves to perfectionism and create alienation within their very Self.

One thing is knowing how to become "*eunuchs for heaven*" and another thing is castrating oneself because this is what the mother has commanded because she wants to be her son's only woman and be loved by him for all his life.

When there is dependence on the internalized mother instead of freedom from her influence there can be no true spiritual path. Even less possible is an alchemical process which requires a synthesis of opposites and a synthesis of all the energies that a human being possesses.

Ulysses shows that he has become a free man when he listens to his companions' request and decides to leave Circe and go on his way toward Ithaca.

He is not yet a man who is quite completely free at this point in his life, however, and so Homer invents the island of Ogygia, found at the edge of the world, where Ulysses remains imprisoned for seven long years.

At night he makes love with Calypso and by day he goes off to the rocky shoreline, longing for his wife.

There is no contradiction here: the *fetal I* wants to stay in the deadly embrace of the mother and the *adult I* wants the freedom to love a woman who is not the mother that has seduced him his whole life.

How much suffering one has to endure before this freedom can be found!

And as usual, one must have a dialectical approach, not a linear one, to be successful in finding it.

I know that what I have written here is not easy to understand. It is important to follow one's own internal Master to find out what the truth really is. An understanding of life that is only intellectual does not get anyone anywhere.

CHAPTER XXI

THE FIVE POISONS ACCORDING TO BUDDHA AND ACCORDING TO HOMER

“Spring, summer, autumn, winter ... and again spring”

A Film by Kim Ki Duk

To examine Buddhist thought I won't use books written on this topic. Instead I will use a beautiful, intense and profound movie by the Korean director Kim Ki Duk, *“Spring, summer, autumn, winter ... and again spring”*.

This author illustrates the existence of two realities, as seen in Buddhist thought and on the type of interpretation I know how to make of it: one that is illusion and of this world and one that is beyond the illusion and that represents the “ultimate reality”, where all those who reach “enlightenment” end up.

In the film there is a door that separates the worldly reality on one side, from the ultimate reality that is represented by the pagoda found in the middle of a lake where a Buddhist monk lives.

The monk's home can also be seen as a reality that is isolated from the rest of the world, a reality that is between two realities. In this intermediate reality it is easier for a human being to follow a spiritual path that will bring him or her to the ultimate reality, after she has completely abandoned the illusory reality.

The Buddhist monk has absolutely no disdain for the worldly reality; he knows that it can contain poisonous herbs that can kill, but it also contains medicinal herbs that can save lives.

It is important to learn about both and how to use the medicinal ones and avoid the poisonous ones.

It is thus legitimate to think that the “ultimate reality” cannot exist without the illusory reality and this is a mystery that Buddhism does not know how to explain.

Every human being that comes into the world has “*five poisons*” inside themselves. The list of these poisons can vary from one commentator on Buddha's teachings to another and there are thousands and thousands of pages written about this.

What is certain is that it is not possible to reach enlightenment if one does not first free themselves of these poisons.

Over time, Buddhism has branched out into many different schools of thought. The types of Buddhism that are most known in the west are Tibetan Buddhism (the Dalai Lama), Zen Buddhism (for example “Zen and the Art of Archery”) and the Buddhism of the Japanese monk Nichiren.

The first poison is the *illusion* that makes us believe that the reality we perceive with our senses is the only true reality.

The second poison is *desire*. Desire creates dependence and dependence generates violence and thoughts that bring death with them.

The third poison is *rage* and rage produces homicidal and suicidal urges.

The fourth poison is *pride* and the fifth is *greed*.

The child who lives with the monk clearly expresses how much he is driven by these five poisons while he is growing up, and the monk teaches him the path to free himself of them.

The title and the magnificent scenes in the film tell us that we see only one reality, that we call nature, but although nature has four ways of expressing itself according to the different seasons - spring, summer, autumn and winter – we do not think there are four different natures but only four different ways in which the same nature expresses itself.

Human reality can express itself in different ways that are not perceptible to the senses.

Sexual desire, that is what overcomes the young monk, is in itself not something to feel guilty about, but it can induce violence (and this is cause for guilt), which he uses to seduce the girl and to impose his belief that she must belong only to him and to no other.

If she were to suddenly say that she loved another, he would be overcome with pain, jealousy, anger and then a desire to kill, that obeys only his wounded pride.

The director points out that this is one of the ways we can see how *desire* generates thoughts and decisions that bring death.

How is it possible to free oneself of the five poisons and acquire the five elements of wisdom? First of all with constant, daily meditation, in humble devotion before the statue of the Buddha.

But this is not enough. Pride and homicidal impulses become quickly evident in the little boy, who is about seven or eight years old, when he kills a fish and a snake as a game.

The monk does not chastise or reprimand him, but he puts a stone on his shoulder while he is sleeping and tells him: go now and see if the animals you tied a stone to are alive or dead. If they are dead *you will always carry with you a stone on your heart*.

The child understands and confesses that he has made a mistake, but when he has grown up he will do it again in a much worse way, without even realizing he is doing it.

One day a woman comes to the monk's pagoda with her adolescent daughter in tow, who speaks to no one and is completely closed into herself. The monk takes her in to cure her.

Slowly but surely the monk's disciple seduces her and has sexual relations with her.

One day the monk says the girl is cured and her mother comes to take her home.

At this point the young disciple cannot stand the pain of the separation, and he abandons his Master and returns to the world. Desire generates dependence and with it thoughts of death.

Out in the world things don't go as the young man thought. The girl falls in love with another man and leaves him. Terrible jealousy and uncontrollable pain overtake him and he kills the girl.

After this he runs away and returns to his master, where the intense desire to kill himself overtakes him.

His master calmly hits him several times on his back and then he ties him on the roof with a rope, until a candle slowly burns through the rope and he falls to the ground.

The master then writes on the wooden boards that surround his house with a pen.

What does he write, or rather paint? We are not allowed to know because we don't know the Korean language. He probably writes Buddhist teachings or, I believe, he writes a synthesis of his life as a work of art.

When two policemen come to arrest the young murderer, the monk tells them that it is not yet time. The young man must first carve with a knife all the letters that the master painted with a brush. It will take a whole day and a whole night and after that they can take him away.

The two policemen not only do they not complain but they show deep respect for the monk. Slowly but surely they help the young man in his work.

At the same time the master paints all the letters that the young man has carved with different colors, this time using his cat's tail as his brush.

The inner master slowly transforms the banality and the evil of life into a work of art, but it takes time.

Now the police can take the young man away.

The years go by and the monk gets older and older, until one day he takes his boat out to the middle of the lake and there ends his earthly existence. His body no longer serves him, nor does his individuality: his spiritual path has come to an end and he can blend into the One, just as a drop of water blends into the ocean and stops being a drop, because it has become one with the sea. This is what I have read in books that teach about Buddhism.

While his body is burning and the boat sinks, a snake quickly leaves the boat and swims towards the monk's house to make it its permanent home.

All through the film there are many different animals who live in the monk's house.

First there is a little dog, then there is a rooster, then there's a cat, a serpent and lastly there is a turtle.

Each animal has symbolical meaning.

I can only try to describe these meanings according to what I know. Human beings need their animalistic components while they travel the path that will take them to the ultimate reality, reached by becoming Enlightened.

The dog represents the animal part of us that allows us to be tamed and is our friend. Then there is the rooster that represents pride, and pride can be bridled but it cannot be tamed.

The cat represents that part that is animal and wild that allows itself to be only partially domesticated with much effort.

When a person manages to blend the animal with the spiritual and the artistic parts, then their life has truly become an immortal work of art that can be transmitted from one universe to another, from one person to another, from a master to his disciple.

Then the turtle comes along, which is a symbol of eternity and immortality.

But there is yet something else that is shown in the film.

When it is winter and all the water around the little temple has become solid ice, a young woman with her head covered with a veil appears, carrying a baby who is crying desperately (maybe this woman was seduced and wants to get rid of the fruit of her guilt?).

The woman goes into the temple and puts the baby at the feet of the statue of the Buddha, where the serpent is curled.

The young monk observes all of this and he nears the woman, but he is incapable of saying even one word of comfort or to offer his help.

The woman goes out and walks away, but there is a hole in the ice around the pagoda and the woman falls in and dies.

The young monk, who has already done much to purify himself of his guilt and has also served his rightful sentence according to the law, is shocked by this and he remembers what his master had told him long ago: if someone dies because of you, you will always carry a stone on your heart.

He then ties a rope around his waist with a huge round stone tied to it, picks up a statue that looks like a Buddha but I am not sure it is, and climbs with great difficulty to the top of the mountain that looms over the lake.

When he gets to the top he bends in prayer while the sun comes up over the mountain range in the distance.

I do not know how to interpret these last scenes in their full meaning. What I do understand is that only after the death of the veiled woman does he understand the violence he used against the girl that had been entrusted to the monk, and he understands that he is the one guilty for what happened afterwards, and not the girl.

He also understands that he is still carrying a stone on his heart and he must do something to free himself of it.

The fact that he has become deeply aware of his guilt is the sign that he has conquered humility and now he can understand that spiritual acrobatics are much more important than the physical ones he has learned through practicing the martial arts.

To be able to recognize one's guilt means being able to accomplish spiritual acrobatics, and there are very few who are capable of doing so, because their hybris and arrogance are always right on guard. These are what keeps people from achieving true humility and true wisdom.

This does not happen to the older monk but the director tells us that we can look at his film also in this other way: the older monk lives again through his spiritual path through the actions of the younger monk. Through him he can re-examine his whole life and see how he moved from guilt to enlightenment.

Is this the true work of art? Is this the true beauty that can reach the tops of mountains and from there voyage from one universe to the next?

When a drop of water falls into the ocean, it is true that it stops being a drop and becomes one with the ocean. But it is also true that a work of art is something much greater than the ocean and the ocean cannot do, despite its immensity, what

a human being can do with her life as an artist of her life and of the life of the universe.

In a symphony all the musical notes blend together into a single reality that is the symphony itself, but the notes themselves do not disappear. They maintain their individuality and they stay there on the sheet of music so they can guide the director and the musicians who are playing.

Here we have both singleness and multiplicity, where in the ocean there is only singleness. This is what I object to in Buddhism, which I nevertheless respect enormously.

Now let's look at Homer's thought as it appears to my way of interpreting the Odyssey.

For Homer there are not two realities, one that we see and one that is beyond this world. There are, instead three: one belongs to intrauterine life, one belongs to intracosmic life and one that belongs to ultracosmic life (the cave of the nymphs).

The gods are not found on one side and humans on the other: instead, there are cosmic and human forces and both are called to collaborate with each other and create a third reality. Cosmo-Art calls this third reality *Secondary Beauty* and it is what allows humans to go from intracosmic reality to ultracosmic reality.

Throughout the numerous commentaries on the Odyssey, written from the time of ancient Greece up until today, which Filippomaria Pontani gives an accurate catalog of in his large volume entitled "*Sguardi su Ulisse*" {Looking at Ulysses}, published by Edizioni di storia e letteratura, Roma 2005, I found only one mention of a "secret, hidden beauty" (*apòtheton kállos*) on page 157, by the author Nicetas (11th century). I wonder if he was speaking of the same type of beauty that I am.

Otherwise, all the other many authors quoted often only allegorical, geographical, cosmological and ethical interpretations of Homer's thought. They all agree, however, that Homer's poems are books of wisdom.

Cosmic forces are within human beings but they are described as personified divine forces that are outside of humans and keep up a dialog with them. This is not a theatrical metaphor, it is a poetic one.

At the time of Homer, the Greeks took metaphors literally and believed in the gods. Today we know instead that poetic metaphors are speaking of a reality that is hidden within us and is not found on Mount Olympus, as the ancient Greeks believed.

Homer also believes that humanity carries within five poisons and that *secondary beauty* cannot be created unless one suffers and toils to free oneself of them.

These poisons can be identified as follows:

Hybris and rage

Repressed hatred and homicidal tendencies

Greed and the existential lie

Envy and suicidal tendencies

The infinite arrogant demands of the *fetal I*

Some of these poisons break out two at a time and sometimes they break out all at once, especially when repressed hatred kicks into action.

Some of these poisons were amply described in the Iliad (Agamemnon, Achilles, Ajax, Paris etc.), but in the Odyssey there are some that were not represented earlier.

For Homer, access to wisdom can be obtained by maintaining a continual dialog between the *Global I* and the *SELF*, both the *Personal SELF* and the *Cosmic SELF*, as represented by Athena, Zeus, Hermes and Poseidon, divinities that are mentioned often throughout the poem.

Ulysses, who has his five poisons just like everybody else, obtains wisdom by talking with and listening to the wise advice offered to him by the gods, who nevertheless do not save him from any amount of suffering or from any opportunity for Ulysses to bang his head against them.

On the other hand, his companions do not do this and for this reason they all die as a result of their insanity. Aegisthus doesn't listen either and after killing Agamemnon he too dies because of his madness.

It is ridiculous to think that evil befalls human beings because of the gods. To the contrary, evil is produced when human beings refuse to listen to the wise advice they receive from them.

In Homer there is no god that offers rewards or punishments, like in many religions throughout the world. Every individual is the cause of the evil that befalls them.

Homer says, however, that there are other evils that come from traumas experienced during intrauterine life, besides those cause by human vices. It is essential to re-live all these traumas many times during one's adult life so as to become free of them once and for all.

These evils are personified in the devouring mother, the seductive and castrating mother and by the phallic mother, who believes she has power over the life and death of her children.

There are also the evils that rise from the *fetal I*, that is often in complicity with the mother and can completely suffocate the *adult I*.

In the Odyssey these mothers are portrayed in various ways: Polyphemus, the Lestrygonians, Circe, the Sirens, Scylla and Charybdis, Calypso and finally the Suitors, whose massacre is described in half of the poem's books. Each of these figures has more than one symbolic meaning. The Suitors are the utmost concentration of all the possible evils that has ever been described.

To be able to recuperate the beauty of life, it is an absolute necessity to free ourselves of the five poisons and of the evils that come from the trauma experienced in the uterus.

It is equally necessary to do so to be able to free all the creativity that humanity possesses and which can help us decide to become artists of our lives and of the universe, capable of creating *secondary beauty*.

Now let's come to the point. The path of wisdom would require that each one of us feels compelled to ask ourselves where these five poisons are present in our own lives and what we must do to become aware of them, so we can realize that we are the ones who poison our own lives, and not others.

The type of mentality that usually governs our lives is that we are all good people: we don't steal, we don't kill and we don't hurt anyone.

And there's even more: we are all perfect and if someone criticizes us for something we are immediately offended and we respond angrily.

If we really want to create a new type of beauty, if we really want to undertake a path of spiritual growth, we must ask: how can we penetrate the dense fog that surrounds us and discover how we are controlled by these poisons?

When we work together in the Cosmo-Art group Laboratories, we always attempt to create a *Choral SELF* where everyone's best energies are condensed and which can be accessed by anyone.

If we were to all ask each other: how did you manage to discover the five poisons? And if we were all willing to give the gift of how we managed to become aware of them, with generosity and humility, this would indeed be a great event for the single organism we are creating within the Cosmo-Artistic movement.

This indeed would mark the existence of a *Choral SELF* that is full of incomparable richness.

I have faith that slowly but surely we can reach this goal and I entrust it to the heart of each one of you.

How did I do it? I always kept as the basis of my own spiritual path Saint Augustine's affirmation ("*Nihil humani a me alienum puto*" that translated means: there is no evil that I see others do that I myself am not capable of doing).

Furthermore, every time I have been hurt by someone else's evil I have always looked for where that evil was present in my life, and I always found it.

It has always been more painful and difficult to then decide to rid myself of it, without expecting to have a magic wand that would do so in one simple sweep.

Liberation never happens in a linear way, it comes about dialectically. First the poison must somehow be expressed, then it must be recognized and taken responsibility for, by developing a profound awareness that the poison is ours and belongs to no one else. Only after having done this can we eliminate it from our life, every time it is necessary to do so.

In the discussion I will undertake later on about the way Ulysses behaves when confronted with his own envy, when he returns to Aeolus after his companions have opened the bag of winds, it is completely evident how he oscillates between owning up to and negating his madness, by placing the blame for it on sleepiness, on his companions or on the gods.

This type of path is in complete contrast with the Christian perfectionistic ideal that, in my opinion, is what today corrodes the West. It almost always generates either a total alienation from oneself, or an unlimited and universal hypocrisy.

It's insane to want to attempt to obtain a perfection that renders us inhuman instead of human.

It is wise to want to recuperate lost beauty and then become capable of creating a new type of beauty that does not yet exist and that Life is calling us to bring forth.

CHAPTER XXII

WHY DOES HOMER CHOOSE ULYSSES?

This question is an important one, but first we must ask another one.

Why did Homer write the Odyssey?

The Iliad is an epic poem that celebrates the heroism of the Achaeans, strong protectors, and the Atreidae. This epic poem was sung and celebrated all throughout the courts of Greece and was listened to with great enthusiasm by the Greek people.

But the Odyssey is not an epic poem and it is possible that the Court of Ithaca never even existed.

So why dedicate a poem to Ulysses? There was no one interested in commissioning such a work and how could he ever hope to find an attentive audience for it?

It's true that there was a vast amount of myths created around the figure of Ulysses, but what is it that inspires Homer to write a poem that is so very different from the Iliad?

The only answer I can find is that works that are produced by great artists come from their inner world and they are the result of a poetic necessity that inspires the poet to write, without asking many questions.

Homer became a fine expert on the human condition and a very attentive explorer of the meaning of life that originates in a *cosmic goal*.

Homer penetrated the secrets and traumas of intrauterine life and he did so not through scientific research, but through his poetic intuition, and he wants to share his discoveries with others.

Homer understood how madness and wisdom both reside in the human heart and he wanted to write a poem to celebrate wisdom and condemn madness.

Homer knows that pain is a cosmic force and that this force, together with wisdom and art, can create an immortal type of beauty that not even the gods possess.

Homer knows that he is an artist and that he can create great poems, but he knows above all that human beings, if they want, can become artists of their own lives and artists of the universe. He knows that this type of art is immensely superior to the art of his poetry.

From his magnificent poetry emerges an immortal figure that is neither a warrior nor a poet, but rather becomes a new type of artist who, with great courage, knows how to make many syntheses: between the intrauterine world, the outer world and the ultracosmic world; between the world of the *I* and the world of the *You*; between the world of the *I* and the world of the *Personal SELF* and the

Cosmic SELF. By making a synthesis between human forces and cosmic ones, he creates the glorious *concordance* that everyone dreams about and that very few manage to achieve.

This man Ulysses, who is no longer the Ulysses of the myths but is Homer's Ulysses, will end up fascinating many people during his own time and throughout the centuries to come.

It will take indeed centuries for Homer's Ulysses to be understood in all his depth and greatness, but this is not important. There will always be Athena, somewhere, who keeps whispering the truth and one day humanity will understand.

Now let's try to understand why Homer chose Ulysses to impersonate himself and his poetic vision.

Homer says that Ulysses is an artist who creates his own life and the life of the cosmos, and he is a teacher of life for people of all eras.

Why?

Because Homer himself learned how to transform himself and his own darkness in a way that few others portrayed in world literature have been able to.

The first Ulysses suffers from envy.

That he had a problem with envy becomes very clear when Ulysses almost insults Eurialus, the Phaeacian prince, when the games are about to begin:

*Certainly not to all men do the gods
give wonderful gifts, such as beauty, intelligence, eloquence.
One can be not much to look at,
but a god makes his speech beautiful; and everyone is fascinated by
him: he speaks with confidence,
with suave ability; he shines in his discourse,
and when he walks through town, they look at him as though he were a
god.
Another man, instead, has the beauty of the gods,
but his words are not crowned with grace.
You have splendid beauty: a god could create
nothing better: but your mind is empty.
You have inspired rage in my soul
by speaking so poorly. I am not new to the games,
as you blab about, but I was – I believe – one of the first,
when I was full of vigor, and had strength in my arms.
Now I have been won over by misfortune and evil: I have suffered
tremendously in the wars of men and on the frightening waves.
But even so, having suffered so much, I will excel at the games.
(Od. VIII, 167-184)*

It's clear that Ulysses is speaking of himself and of how he suffers because he is not one of the most beautiful men, he who wants to be first in everything. He was not given the gift of beauty, he was given the gift of speaking, but this gift does not remove the suffering he feels for his lack of beauty.

He is fully aware of this when he goes to Sparta and with the other Achaean princes he asks Helen's hand, who is the daughter of Tyndarus. It is impossible to think that Helen could choose Ulysses among all the other princes.

This is why Ulysses uses all his cunning to not have to return home with empty hands.

When Tyndarus cannot decide who to give Helen to, because he doesn't want anyone to be disappointed, Ulysses is ready with a plan, that he had already thought up.

Tyndarus has a niece, the daughter of his brother Icarius, Penelope, who is also very beautiful.

Ulysses proposes a pact to Tyndarus: you convince Icarius to give me his daughter for a wife and I will solve the problem for you.

He tells him, "Let Helen choose who she wants to marry and all those who are excluded will make an *oath* that if Helen should ever be in danger, everyone will go to her aid"

Tyndarus and the princes accept the solution proposed by Ulysses and Helen chooses Menelaus. Ulysses takes Penelope away with him on his cart, even though she does not want to go and is angry towards her father who has betrayed her.

As we said in the beginning, here we are witnessing an extraordinary event.

For the first time in human history there is someone who swears to be willing to fight for beauty, should this beauty ever be in danger. There are many who fight for justice, but how many would be willing to fight for beauty?

How many ask themselves every day: what do I want to do, create beauty or ugliness?

Against her wishes, Penelope is given to Ulysses to be his wife. Was there love in this choice? No, there was only bargaining and violence. This is one of the reasons that can explain why Penelope is so hard-hearted when Ulysses returns to Ithaca and she does not want to recognize him.

Ulysses does not love himself.

He carries this in his own name, Odysseus, that translated means: "he who hates himself and is hated by others".

His grandfather Autolycus, who was hated by everyone because he was a thief, gave him this name.

But there is an ever greater reason why Ulysses does not love himself: even though he does not know it, it is probable that he is not really the son of his father Laertes.

The night before Anticlea's wedding, Autolycus supposedly asked his daughter to spend the night with Sisyphus. Ulysses was supposedly conceived from this unlawful union.

Here a question arises: when Anticlea realizes she has gotten pregnant after sleeping with Sisyphus, does she accept the pregnancy, or does she reject it? And if she rejects it, why is she afraid that her guilt will come to light? Does she attempt to abort? I believe so, because otherwise there is no explanation why Ulysses has to face monsters who are assassins (Polyphemus, the Lestrygonians, Scylla and Charybdis) and people (the Suitors, Penelope) who plot to kill him.

I also think, however, that Anticlea, having been unsuccessful in aborting the pregnancy and oppressed by her guilt, establishes with the son she is carrying a total enmeshment.

This is a second reason why Ulysses will end up having lots of problems with women.

How else can we explain why Agamemnon and Achilles receive two beautiful young slaves, Briseis and Criseis, as war booty (and will fight to the death over one of them), whereas Ulysses receives none?

During the ten years spent in Troy it is never mentioned that Ulysses has a woman beside him.

Why is it that Ulysses, who is the one mainly responsible for Troy's fall with his cunning idea of the Trojan horse, receives gold and riches as his booty but does not get a slave?

They give him Hecuba, the old queen, the wife of Priam.

Isn't this a cruel joke?

What is a warrior going to do with an old woman?

In the *Odyssey*, however, there is no trace of Hecuba alongside Ulysses, just as in the *Iliad* there is no mention of the fact that Troy fell thanks to Ulysses.

The brilliance of the Trojan horse is narrated in the *Odyssey* by Demodocus, after Ulysses explicitly asks him to do so (*Od.* VIII, 486 and following verses).

The intense enmeshment that is established between Anticlea and her son must have caused Ulysses enormous sexual problems that he manages to resolve only after having spent a long time with Circe the sorceress and the goddess Calypso.

How can we affirm this? A first reason can be found in the fact that Anticlea dies because she cannot handle Ulysses' prolonged absence. She was an anxious, possessive mother, just like many are in the Mediterranean area, and she could not live without her son near her side. This is what Eumeus tells Ulysses about how his mother died:

*She wore herself out with suffering over her glorious son,
and died a very sad death (Od. XV, 358-359)*

We could find another reason to back our reasoning in the transformation of Ulysses' companions in swine. When sexuality is repressed for a long time, it can explode all at once and can drag a man into abnormal sexual practices.

At this point it is easy for a woman to transform a man into a lustful pig.

A third reason, that may find proof only for those who specialize in the analysis of the unconscious, is that the first time that Ulysses leaves Ithaca and his mother he has a bad accident: while he is hunting on the Parnassus, a wild boar attacks him and leaves a deep gash in his thigh. Is this a coincidence, a lack of attention on Ulysses' part, or was he feeling deeply guilty for having detached from his mother, and he had to punish himself?

No matter how we look at it, this wound is a visible sign of how he was invisibly castrated.

The first Ulysses is not a free man.

Freedom means being in complete control of oneself and not being controlled by any other people or things.

Ulysses is controlled by his mother and by the intrauterine incest that has kept him tied to her since before he was even born.

This is why he encounters possessive women like Circe and Calypso.

He is controlled by the trauma he experienced in the womb and by the hatred that these traumas created in him.

It is as if there is a labyrinth inside of him (see Chiarini: "Odisseo e Il labirinto marino" {Odysseus and the marine labyrinth}) where many monsters are hiding who are ready to suddenly come out and devour him.

He is possessed by the passions of the *Global I*, and especially by greed, pride, hybris, envy and by his homicidal and suicidal urges.

He is possessed by the thousands of expectations that assail his life just as the arrogant Suitors place a siege on his house, with Penelope as their accomplice.

The Suitors say of her:

*We were courting the wife of sir Odysseus, who had been away a long time;
and she neither rejected the despised wedding nor did she go through with it,*

while she prepared our destruction. (Od. XXIV)

The journey from Troy to Ithaca is a way for Ulysses to courageously relive this internal labyrinth, to bring the monsters to the surface and free himself of his hatred, his passions and his arrogant demands.

It is a journey he undertakes so he can learn the truth about who he is and what he is made up of.

It is a trial that allows him to transmute himself and become a free man, who is capable of loving and forgiving others, capable of loving and forgiving himself as well; he becomes capable of extracting beauty from ugliness, of creating *secondary beauty*, that is born of the fusion of the *I* with the *SELF*, the *I* with the *You*, the *I* with *Us* and the *I* with the Cosmos. In this way a single living organism is created, whose life lasts forever.

It is a journey that manages to blend cosmic forces with human ones to create a single living organism and create the type of immortal life that nature or the cosmos alone cannot create.

One kernel of corn or any type of seed contains the life that was put there by nature.

This life can generate new life but it must always pass through death.

A work of art contains the life that was infused into it by the artist that created it.

This life form is autonomous and is separate from the artist. Once it has been created it doesn't die, it does not have to pass through death. This is a type of power that an artist has but that nature does not possess.

When a man and a woman create *secondary beauty*, when a group creates *secondary beauty*, they have created a life form that has an immortal soul that will not ever have to die.

This is the type of power that Cosmo-Art attributes to human beings. Certain rules and conditions apply and they have been described in my books *The Ulysseans* and "La nascita della Cosmo-Art" {The birth of Cosmo-Art}.

This immortal soul does not end up in heaven: it can travel from one universe to another, for eternity.

This immortal soul renders those who created it immortal and it also makes the universe we belong to immortal.

This immortality goes beyond the matter of the body and the matter of the universe.

Matter can dissolve but an immortal soul that is the condensed energy found in *secondary beauty* will never dissolve.

By reading the Odyssey it does not seem that Ulysses is hated by any of the other Achaeans.

His companions most certainly both love and hate him and they betray him terribly at least twice. The first time is when they open the bag of winds given to Ulysses by Aeolus, because they are envious of this gift, and they lose sight of Ithaca which they had already glimpsed on the horizon.

The second time is when on the island of Trinacria they break the oath they had taken to not touch the oxen that were sacred to the sun god. They kill and eat them, which unleashes Zeus' fury and they are all killed.

The one who hates him terribly is Poseidon, the god of the sea and the father of Polyphemus.

Beyond the fact that Ulysses blinds Polyphemus, there is a reason that can better justify Poseidon's hostility.

When Ajax returns towards home after the fall of Troy, he runs into a huge storm that threatens his life. Poseidon comes to his aid and saves him, but Ajax, acting out of his stupid arrogance, belittles the gods and brags that he had saved himself.

At this point Poseidon, as narrated in the Odyssey (Od. IV, 505-511), breaks a cliff where Ajax is standing in two, causing the part he is sitting on to crumble, thus killing him.

*... and Poseidon heard him speaking his arrogant words
and so he immediately took up his trident
and struck the Gyrea cliff and broke it in half.
Part of it stayed where it was, the other fell into the sea,
and that was where Ajax stood,
so he was carried away with it into the infinite sea.
That's how he died, by drinking seawater and drowning.*

The Greek gods do not tolerate the hybris of human beings.

Ulysses expresses all of his hybris when after he manages to get out of Polyphemus' cave he arrogantly makes fun of him. But we will specifically look at his hybris later on.

Ulysses is ugly and he hates himself because he is not handsome. He is not tall and imposing like Agamemnon, he isn't strong like Diomedes and he is not an athlete like Achilles.

He's short and stocky. He is a gifted speaker and he is often chosen for missions where oratory prowess is needed.

He isn't rich like Menelaus and Agamemnon. He is the king of a little island, Ithaca, where the only wealth is found in herds of cattle, sheep, goats and pigs.

Homer chose Ulysses because Ulysses does not love himself and he doesn't know how to love, but he wants to learn how to love himself and to love another.

By continually comparing himself to others, Ulysses believes that he is “*no man*” and he does not deserve love.

This is why he introduces himself to Polyphemus with this name:

*... “my name is Noman, my mother and father
call me Noman as do all my companions”... Od.IX, 366-67)*

He most certainly thought of this name beforehand, when he was camped out beneath Troy's walls and he was suffering from horrible envy towards the other Achaean princes who were all handsome, rich and powerful.

Polyphemus says to him:

*I have been long awaiting that a great and handsome hero
would come here, full of enormous strength.
instead this skinny little nothing
has blinded my one eye, after he got me drunk on wine. (Od.IX, 513-516)*

At the beginning of his journey Ulysses is full of too much hybris, that is, of too much pride, too much arrogance, too many expectations, too much greed, too much envy and too much hatred that are hidden in his soul. This is his madness. He is a warrior and a predator.

But not only is he crazy, but both madness and wisdom are intensely present within him. Homer needs a character like this so he can demonstrate how one can transform himself and his own darkness and how one can become a master of life for himself and for others.

A master of knowledge of himself and of life.

A master that knows how to blend the parts within himself and how to meld with the cosmos.

A master that knows how to recognize his own madness as well as his wisdom, a master in the art of loving himself and in the art of forgiveness and love, a master that knows how to create that immortal beauty that both he and the whole cosmos are in need of.

He chooses Ulysses, because Ulysses is a man who has not yet been born, he has not yet completely left the maternal womb and, unlike the other Greek heroes, is willing to face any type of pain so as to be born completely.

Being completely born means deciding to free oneself of:

- repressed hatred that has been carried inside from intrauterine life onward, due to the trauma experienced there and especially due to the trauma of rejection and abandonment
- his hybris that forces him to believe he is an absolute every time he is competing against someone else
- his internal monsters that devour him many different times and in many different guises
- his greed that is typical of a fetus that is never satiated, in proportion to how lacking his relationship with his mother is
- his envy of all the goods his mother possesses and that he would like to take for himself
- his complicity with the seductive, castrating mother that doesn't want her son to detach from her and become a free man.

All of Ulysses' experiences, first during the ten years in Troy and then during the other ten while he travelled from Troy to Ithaca, are sustained by a definite desire to be fully born, even at the cost of the *many woes* he will have to face.

Every step of this journey is described in the *Odyssey*.

What we know of the other Greek heroes does not speak of a similar type of journey, nor does it indicate they were men who were completely born.

Achilles is completely enmeshed with his mother and the only way he can free himself of this symbiosis is to die in battle.

His hatred for his mother is his hatred towards himself: so as to not leave his hatred behind, he lets Patroclus, the person he loves most in all the world, go to battle and die.

He causes infinite grief for the Achaeans just so he can get revenge on Agamemnon, who acts like a spoiled and irresponsible child.

Agamemnon is the best representative that Homer offers in the *Iliad* of hybris, made up of pride, omnipotence, arrogance and stupidity.

Ajax despairs and goes mad because he cannot have Achilles' weapons instead of Ulysses, who also wants them. As far as his "arrogant speaking" goes, that causes his death, we mentioned that before.

Homer speaks at length of the Suitors who have an "arrogant heart" (*Od.I,103*) and he dedicates at least half of his poem to the description of how they are destroyed.

For the Greek heroes, the destruction of Troy is like the destruction of the mother and, coincidentally, this can only happen after Ulysses and other warriors

hide in the wooden horse (in a wooden uterus). Hatred for the mother begins in the womb.

The idea for this horse that will bring Troy's destruction comes from Ulysses.

In the uterus where Ulysses was conceived, he becomes familiar with hatred. His need to vindicate himself with his mother begins. When a mother takes over the life of the child that she is carrying, her uterus becomes like wood and it is no longer of flesh like it should be. This causes the child immense pain and much anger and hatred springs forth from it.

Anticlea is a mother who is enmeshed with her son and this explains why she dies of heartbreak when Ulysses takes so long to return to Ithaca.

I believe that this enmeshment that exists between Anticlea and Ulysses gives rise to another one between Ulysses and Penelope, right after the first year of their marriage.

Only this enmeshment can explain why Ulysses refuses to honor his oath and leave immediately for Troy, as do all the other Greek princes.

Ulysses pretends he is crazy to avoid having to leave, but Palamedes figures out what he's doing by putting his baby son Telemachus before his plow. Once he has been discovered Ulysses leaves for Troy, but he gets revenge on Palamedes as soon as possible by making sure he dies.

Homer chooses Ulysses because Ulysses is a courageous, cunning, patient and tenacious man, but above all he chooses him because Ulysses knows how to *pray*, with a special type of prayer that is not to be found elsewhere either in the East or the West.

What I have understood about Ulysses' way of praying is similar to my own way of praying. I have discussed this in detail in my paper entitled "The Prayer of the Ulysseans" (see next chapter).

I have decided to include here the whole text of this prayer, with some added commentary, because I consider it to be of fundamental importance and an integral part of this book.

This type of prayer is one of the focal points of the whole Odyssey and of Ulysses' alchemical path.

For centuries the Greeks read and commented on Homer but they never caught the importance of this new form of prayer. There is no evidence that this prayer was ever taught and practiced.

I have a very harsh way of looking at this fact: it's easy to pray by offering animals as sacrifices; it is very uncomfortable, instead, to pray by offering parts of oneself in sacrifice, parts that must die so one can become virtuous and wise.

Ulysses is the ultimate hero because he accepted losing everything he had and everything he was, in various moments throughout his life, so he could transform himself from a man mostly controlled by his *fetal I* to a man capable of creating an immortal type of beauty that today we can continue creating.

Finally, Ulysses is loved by Athena, as we can see by what the goddess herself says about him:

And I cannot leave you alone with your anguish,
because you are gentle, wise and careful. (Od. XIII, 331-332)

CHAPTER XXIII

THE PRAYER OF THE ULYSSEANS

There are many types of prayer.

It is praying when we ask someone for help (our ancestors, the gods, a God); we have examples of this type of prayer throughout the millennia found in thousands and thousands of archeological findings.

Still today this is the most common form of prayer. It is a weak form.

I adhere to a much larger definition of prayer.

Asking that something be given, even when it should be our given right, is prayer. For example, by asking our internal positive mother to give us what was taken away by the negative mother we obtain a double effect: the first is the reconstruction of the internal positive mother, like a benevolent presence that takes care of us; the second is the liberation from feeling guilty about wanting to get back what was violently taken from us by arrogantly demanding it.

These two effects generate a third, that is most rare and precious: the ability to actually enjoy having our rights, that we have recuperated by receiving a gift rather than simply taking it by force.

I would call this a strong prayer and an example translated into words could be: *“Mother, would you please give me back the freedom you took away from me?”*.

This type of request contains at least three things: a) the ability to put aside one's hurt pride, b) the ability to forgive one's mother and c) the ability to recognize that the mother does have a positive side.

Acting in this way is a way of expressing love for ourselves even more than expressing love for the mother.

And it is like travelling around the moon and discovering the other side of the moon, the side that we usually cannot see but that does exist.

Expressing gratitude to Life is a prayer.

As is expressing appreciation to someone who deserves it. This is a type of prayer that dispels envy and introduces justice in relationships between people.

For me, prayer, in its most basic form, has meant and still means being able to create a source of light and a source of continuous transformation in my life. A constant journey from lies to truth and authenticity. A way of transforming and unifying my self and my various internal parts. A journey that carries me from ugliness to beauty.

Intelligence and willpower are helpful for many things, but in many situations we don't know what to do, we don't know what to choose, we don't know how to act. We are surrounded by darkness and we don't know how to get out of it. In these cases it is important to turn to the precious help prayer can offer, as a possible source of light within ourselves and that materializes only if we learn how to pray.

In this sense, prayer is an indispensable action if we want to go from living life as thieves to living life as a gift and from living life as violence to living life as a work of art.

If we observe our existential reality, we can see that it is not only the *I Person* who prays, but it is also the *Corporeal I*, the *Psychological I* and the *SELF*, each one with its own way of doing so. The *Corporeal I* prays when it turns to the *I Person* and asks it to heal its physical ailments or to simply give it food, rest and play.

The *Psychological I* prays when it asks the *I Person* to decide to do something about healing its psychological problems.

The *SELF* prays when it knocks on the door of the *I* in a thousand different ways so it will decide to listen to it and carry out the transformations that are necessary, according to the laws of life.

The artist prays too, when he invokes a Muse to receive inspiration when there is none to be had, and he prays even more when he is swimming in the torment of creation. This prayer is not known as such, but it is indispensable just the same. I think it is only right to call it prayer.

To somehow define the structure of the *I Person*, let's say that it is a spiritual principle that makes decisions based on love and on hatred, it decides to be free or to be a slave, it decides to be true or to be false, it decides to be a victim or to be an artist of its own life and of the life of the universe.

The *I Person* is the living spiritual principle that chooses whether to value itself or to despise itself; it chooses to embrace certain values and which values have meaning rather than others; it chooses which dreams and projects it will follow; it chooses whether to have hope or to surrender to nihilism.

The fact that the *Psychological I*, the *Corporeal I* or the *SELF* most certainly cannot make any of these choices by themselves offers ample proof that the *I Person* exists.

Therefore we can also make the affirmation that the gene for prayer, that might explain why some pray and some don't, will never be found.

Prayer, too, is a free choice made by the *I Person*, helped along or hindered by the culture and the environment it lives in.

The type of prayer that I want to draw your attention to, is the best way to accomplish a fusion between the *I* and the *SELF*, the *Personal SELF* and the *Cosmic SELF*. It is action-reflection-dialog that requires years of practice so that this fusion can come about.

To avoid any danger of mystical alienation, I want to make it clear that this fusion is not an end in itself. Its purpose is to transform the *I* and to create a fusion between the *I* and the Life of the Cosmos, between the *I* and a *You* of a man and a woman. This last fusion is the most difficult to achieve for human beings. As history shows us, not only is not everyone capable of realizing it, but many are downright against it.

We are living beings and we therefore possess life, but our will is almost always in opposition to Life. Our constant disappointment is that “life never goes the way we want it to” and this is a clear example of how there is no fusion between ourselves and Life.

The fact, then, that the *I* and the *You* are in constant conflict is another clear example of how a fusion does not exist between an *I* and a *You*, even when the two are very much in love.

Homer tells us that Ulysses turns to prayer many times. His prayers are directed both to Zeus and Athena.

When Zeus responds, either the god Hermes arrives, or a lightning bolt comes out of a clear sky. Hermes appears to tell Ulysses how he must deal with the enchantress Circe and how he can win her favor; he comes to tell Calypso that Zeus wants her to let Ulysses go and that Zeus’ decision is final.

When Ulysses decides to kill the Suitors, Zeus sends a lightning bolt so his approval is visible.

When Ulysses prays to Athena, she doesn’t always show herself to him, but Homer tells us that the goddess often acts even before he formulates his prayer. She does so by coming to his aid so that he can reach Ithaca, step by step, the island of *secondary beauty*.

If we look at Zeus and Athena as being inner parts of Ulysses, we can see that Zeus represents *a will that cannot be bargained with* as well as *unexpected help* that arrives suddenly, when he has lost all hope. Instead, Athena represents Ulysses’ wisdom, that works for his wellbeing, often unbeknownst to him. In the very first lines of the *Odyssey*, Homer affirms that this wisdom can be found within every human being.

The will that cannot be bargained with, in my opinion, belongs to both the *laws of life* that we carry inside ourselves, and the *Cosmic SELF*, which contains a cosmic will that is greater than our own.

This will works toward the realization of a global purpose that our intelligence is often incapable of understanding ahead of time.

The *unexpected help* is an expression of the deep resources of human beings, resources that we often do not utilize.

Ulysseans also pray to their *SELF* (Zeus and Athena), because they know that without prayer they cannot become artists of their own lives and of the life of the universe.

Prayer is an energizing action that allows the *I* to overcome its fears and find the courage it doesn't yet have to make the right decisions. It is also a space that is created inside of ourselves, where the *I* becomes capable of undergoing the kinds of changes it must make so it can see what it doesn't want to see and can do what it normally doesn't want to do.

Prayer is an energy field that is built up every time the prayer expands. It allows the *I* to gradually reach a fusion between the *I* and the *SELF*. This fusion is an indispensable goal for those who want to transform their life into a work of art.

The *SELF* is the first basic "*You*" within the *I*. (When the *I* is not specified, we are always referring to the *I Person*, which is the central subject of the human individual).

The *I* and the *SELF* form a couple of opposites that contains both attraction and repulsion, just like in the male-female couple.

And just like there is an inner male-female couple and an external one, there is also a *SELF* that is partly internal and partly external. It speaks to us from within and also from outside ourselves.

Between the *I* and the *You* in a couple, there can be passion and feelings of being in love, but when these end hostility or indifference take their place. At this point one is faced with a very basic decision: should one give up on the couple relationship, or should one instead keep aiming for the goal by transforming oneself?

The *I* and the *SELF* do not fall in love with each other. Sometimes they wait for each other, and look for each other. Sometimes there is a sudden enlightenment. Sometimes there is a deep estrangement between them, caused by the hybris of the *I* and its theomania.

But the *I* without the *SELF* is like an artist with no talent and lacking in inspiration.

It will never produce anything that becomes immortal.

Sometimes the *SELF* reveals itself to the *I* in all its light, but this happens only after the *I* has battled for a long time and has waited for the light to be created. It happens only after the *I* has gone through all the darkness that it must experience.

We must not forget that stars, before they produce light, are only a dark cloud. Why should we be any different?

Often our darkness is made up of ignorance and fear, of pride and expectations, of arrogance and insolence, of lies and power and control.

Other times the darkness is a simple natural fact that is caused by the quality of the matter and the spirit we are made up of.

Therefore darkness belongs not just to dark matter, it is found within the *I* and its purpose is to macerate the *I* in its powerlessness and prepare it for its encounter with the *SELF*.

When this process is complete, the *SELF* reveals itself and the *I* is filled with light and joy.

During this process prayer is an indispensable element. It accelerates the maceration of the *I* and of its willfulness and thus opens it so that it can fuse with the *SELF*.

I will now show you a form of prayer that has been very useful to me when I had to turn my life inside out like a glove:

Oh my SELF,
Lord of my life
And child of my love
And my courage,
Whatever You want
Is right that it happens
And wherever You want to go
I want to go too.

Only help me understand:
Why did You put me
In this situation?
And what is it
That You want me to do?

When You want
Then it is time
And when You want
I will arrive at the island
Of secondary beauty.

Even if it seems
Like misfortune
Whatever You want
Is my advantage.

But tell me:
What do You want me to create
Out of so much pain?

And what is wrong
Inside of me
That I must
Transform?

Even though sometimes
I feel I am falling
Into the abyss
If You want me to
For me that's fine
And this is why
I have courage.

Before I become You
And You become me.
While I die and
Am reborn
To reach my dreams
And Your dreams
In your arms
I find my repose.

Sometimes it can happen that the first time you try this prayer you will feel afraid. It's a good sign if that happens. That means that the words touch on important points within our way of being and we are filled with a strong desire to change as well as with a refusal to do so.

We are now living in a time when no one accepts that there is a power greater than ourselves. We don't want anyone to have power over our lives, whether we are right or wrong.

Nor do we accept to leave behind our current identity so we can acquire a better one, even though this is an ineluctable law of life that we do so.

We don't want to have to experience emptiness and we are afraid of going towards the unknown.

We don't want to give up our will to consider ourselves an absolute, nor do we want to stop imposing this absolute on others and on life.

Now, the truth is that we are not an absolute and the *SELF* transcends the *I* and has a power that the *I* does not have. The *SELF* contains the purpose that the *I* must achieve during its life and this purpose was given to it by the *Cosmic SELF*.

Sometimes one's life purpose becomes clear during childhood; sometimes it is revealed day by day, year after year. Sometimes it moves forward in a linear fashion and others it has a dialectical movement, where it passes from one opposite to the other until it finally makes a synthesis. During this journey the *I* does not have the ability to look beyond its own nose: the *SELF* does.

This is why I say that the *SELF* is the Lord of my life.

We must understand that we can overcome our fear if we think that the virtue of courage is not an absence of fear but an ability to overcome it; we can overcome it if we remember that we have the power to create things that do not yet exist, but only if we begin to believe in our own creative power and to trust in it.

The *SELF* can exist by itself but it does not exist in our lives unless we create it; this is why I say that it is the child of our courage and our love.

We can overcome fear if we have a purpose, a dream or a myth to follow. *Secondary beauty* can be an example of this, if we are convinced that our life becomes alienated and senseless if we do not fulfill our purpose or follow our dreams and our myths.

Starting in the nineteen sixties, I created my second life with the help of this prayer. It was very painful but it was also very exciting.

This prayer also helped me to face my own long odyssey so I could become capable of creating a couple relationship and capable of loving a woman. This, too, was a journey full of many woes.

If someone would prefer to begin by using something a bit easier, I can suggest another prayer of mine:

My Father who art
In the deepest part of my heart
Make it so that You
Don't remain
Unknown to me.

May Your wisdom be done
And not mine
And make it so that I can unite
My will with Yours.

Don't give me just
Daily bread
Give me also
A fragment of your soul
So that I like You
Can create one for myself.

Just as the birds in the sky
And the lilies in the field
I have no debts nor debtors
Because life is a gift
And everything is a gift:
Joy, pain and trouble.

But like the lilies and birds are here today
And gone tomorrow
I too will one day vanish into nothing
Unless you help me
Make myself into an artist
And make my life
Into a work of art.

And finally,
Tempt me if necessary,
But free me of perfectionism
And so it is.
May thy wisdom be done
And not mine.

These two prayers are based on the metapsychology which is at the basis of Existential Personalistic Anthropology and of Cosmo-Art.

From the time of conception onward, the *I* is both one and it is four.

The *I* is together the *I Person* and the *Corporeal I* and the *Psychological I* and the *Transcendental I* or *SELF*. This is because all four of these components belong to the same single subject.

But since these four components found in the *I* are all opposed among themselves, often people are full of conflict. Sometimes it happens that they are all in harmony amongst themselves, due to a gift of nature. It is more often the case

that at best they are in battle amongst themselves, and at worse they are split, meaning they are thousands of light years away from each other.

To be able to bring them all together in harmony is the task of the artist who wants to make his or her life into a work of art.

I personally had to begin with harmonizing, first of all, the *I Person* and the *SELF*. I did this with the help of the first prayer above and with the help of the *Corporeal I*, which for me was the book from which I learned to read the voice of the *SELF*. I do know that this type of opportunity is not given to everyone, and those who do not have it must look for other opportunities, but this was the one given to me.

Only after having achieved this first unification was I then able to descend into the abyss of the *Psychological I* and, after that, into the abyss of intrauterine life. First I explored them and then I transformed them, one by one, with infinite patience and constancy, and through enduring great pain. My couple relationship was an indispensable help in being able to carry out this task.

Gradually, after this unification, I went on to create a fusion, and this task is not yet complete. I can say, however, that I am at a good place with it, and being so has allowed me to explore in some way the cosmic and the ultracosmic dimensions. In doing so I was able to formulate the theorem of Cosmo-Art and the myth of Cosmo-Art or *secondary beauty*.

I would never have been able to undertake this journey had I not dedicated many hours to prayer, or to the action-reflection-dialog between my *I* and my *SELF*.

First of all, prayer is an action that creates the space necessary to be able to dialog with the *SELF*; then it is action-reflection that creates two other spaces, one where the *SELF* can be heard and one where we can decide whether or not to say yes to its requests.

We must first *imagine* the changes we must make, by looking at ourselves from above and from below; by using two different points of view that are completely different from each other.

Secondly, prayer is the action that decides to *make* the changes, or rather to go through with a transformation and to make possible what was formerly impossible to do.

Third, it is reflection that becomes *intuition*. Intuition allows us to see what was previously impossible to see, and at this point action becomes *creation*.

It becomes creation of oneself and creation of a new world and a new life.

This phase of “creation” is very important in clearing up how the *I* must interact with the *SELF*.

We are all children of an ancient tradition that tells us that we must accept God’s will and resign ourselves to it. God decides and human beings must only obey.

This is a tradition that must absolutely be changed if we want to follow the path of fusion between the *I* and the *SELF*.

The *SELF* decides, this is true, but it demands that the *I* transform and create something that is very different from that which it had decided upon.

From the synthesis of two opposites, where fusion is a synthesis of opposites, something is created that is entirely different from the two elements that were present before.

An artist that works with marble and stone is faced with two realities that are opposites to his own. These realities must indeed be *accepted* but the artist must be able to completely transform the essence and the existence of marble or of stone.

They must be transformed into the essence and existence of a specific work of art created by a specific artist.

There is an acceptance of the marble’s reality, but it is a dialectical acceptance, that must both be present and not be present; what must appear in its place is a new reality, a living soul that the artist has transmitted to the marble.

When the *SELF*’s will means we must face adversity or a loss, the *I* must accept it but it also must be transformed so that new life can spring from adversity and loss.

It is the *I* that creates this new life, not the *SELF*.

This is why in the first prayer it is written:

*“What do you want me to create
From so much pain?”*

Coming back to Homer and the *Odyssey* it can be helpful to now reflect on two things. The first: Athena cannot do what she wants to do by herself; she must first obtain Zeus’ permission.

This helps us understand why the *Personal SELF* and the *Cosmic SELF* are always in close contact.

The second reflection: everything that Athena does for Ulysses is to help him reach Ithaca. But Ithaca is not the final goal, nor is it the ultimate purpose of either Athena or Ulysses. The poem does not end after the story of how the Phaeacians leave Ulysses while he is sleeping on the shores of Ithaca. If this were the case, the return, the greatly proclaimed “*nostos*” of the poets and writers, would have been concluded here.

Homer is not thinking about the “nostos”. From here on there is yet another half of the poem that tells how Ulysses must reconquer his palace and especially Penelope’s heart.

It took ten years of keeping Troy under siege and then the cunning idea of the wooden horse to be able to break down the walls that held Helen, the contended woman.

It took another ten years (the whole odyssey by sea) of keeping Penelope under siege, as well as Ulysses’ cunning in pretending he is a beggar and his decision to take up the challenge of the bow and arrow, to penetrate Penelope’s heart of stone. It took all of this to break down her childish pride and obtain a heart of a woman capable of loving a man to emerge.

It took twenty years for Ulysses to become a man capable of loving a woman. Why should we be surprised that it took Penelope just as long to become capable of loving a man?

If the *SELF* is the first fundamental “*You*” for a human being, the other fundamental “*You*” is the one represented by one’s partner in a couple relationship.

It is not one bit easy for the *I* to open up to a *You*, to encounter a *You* and decide to meld with it, as happens in nature every time new life is conceived and sperm and ovum merge.

Nuclear fusion and the birth of a star are works of art of nature. So is the fusion of two gametes and the birth of biological life.

Nature alone cannot create the fusion between an *I* and a *You*, so as to create a lasting union between them.

When this occurs it is a work of art made by the man and the woman, who are united in a common goal: the fusion of the masculine and the feminine principles, to create *secondary beauty*.

According to what Homer says in his poem, this is Ulysses’ true purpose, this is Athena’s true purpose.

This purpose is one that neither the gods nor human beings can achieve by themselves.

It is a goal that can be reached only if the gods work together with human beings and if human beings collaborate with the gods.

Human and divine forces (we’ll call the cosmic forces divine) meet through prayer so they can create *secondary beauty* in a Cosmo-Artistic way.

The human condition experienced by both men and women is to remain imprisoned for a long time in the maternal and the paternal dimensions. This is true until both of them manage to free themselves of the entangled ties that keep them anchored to the past, and they find a way to completely take control of their own lives

and their ability to love a *You*. Homer thinks, and I agree with him, that to do so it is necessary to go through a long siege and a long odyssey, topped off by a final battle.

The long siege is narrated in the Iliad, the long Odyssey and the final battle are narrated in the Odyssey.

If we look at both poems it would seem that both are talking about the same thing: that a siege and war are necessary to conquer a woman. But this is not the case. The second Homer is more mature than the first and he has a deeper knowledge of life and of the male and female soul. He also has a second goal in mind, to create beauty that has not yet been created, not just to conquer beauty that already exists.

There are many heroes in the first poem but none of these heroes is capable of transforming himself and becoming a man.

They are capable of doing great things, but none of them is able to overcome the ties that bind him to the maternal dimension.

Achilles remains a prisoner of the maternal dimension and dies. He wanted glory and he got it, but in Hades he mourns the life he lost. Agamemnon is a proud, stupid child that first is the reason the Achaeans must face so much loss and then ends up running blindly into Clytemnestra's revenge and betrayal. Ajax dies a crazy man because they take Achilles' weapons away from him. (Is this not similar to the desperate tears of a baby whose teddy bear has been taken away?). Ulysses takes his booty, glory and weapons but his inner child is still buried within him and it is even more difficult to conquer than Troy. He will have to meet Circe and stay a long time at sea before he can face the descent into Hades, look himself in the face and then decide to transform himself. Hector, instead, had the love of Andromache, but he did not know how to listen to her, or he didn't want to. He too preferred glory over developing a love relationship with a woman.

What is glory except for the evasive image of the mother who empties you of your life and that you can only hold for a moment?

Homer becomes aware of the nothingness that his heroes have devoted themselves to, and in his own heart he regrets this.

He chooses one, Ulysses, and around him he builds a second poem so he can fill the gaps left in the first one.

Helen was a child. She was like a Barbie doll, a toy held by other children. Many Greeks and Trojans risked their lives to help her become a woman. Were they able to do so? Maybe.

Nausicaa was a child who played with other children, before Ulysses came along and woke up her desire to become a woman.

Penelope was also a child. But she was a killer child who was not willing to forgive Ulysses for having taken her away from her father and her homeland through

the violence of an exchange. Nor would she forgive him for having left her alone for twenty years.

Ulysses risks his life twice to help awaken Nausicaa; once when he is about to drown after having lost his raft and the other time when he runs the risk of being smashed against the rocks when he tries to get near shore.

Ulysses risks his life a thousand times to awaken Penelope. He risks it every time he must fight a sea monster; he risks it every time he allows himself to be seduced by a woman; he risks it in his own palace where the Suitors are camped, with Penelope's ambiguous consent, and are plotting his own death and the death of Telemachus.

During his long odyssey by sea Ulysses accumulated experience and knowledge of women who, in one way or another, were always trying to kill him. These women were all different versions of a same woman, his mother, who had tried to kill him while he was in her womb, first by rejecting him and then by loving him in a possessive and devouring manner.

It was a long, difficult road for him to free his life from the maternal dimension and yet keep his life in tact. It is not easy to help a woman free herself from her ties with her mother and not suffer the consequences. One must risk one's life a thousand times and one must also know how to save her. One must know how to forgive a thousand times and never give up, never give up hope.

Men and women today don't like to have to risk their lives and they don't like to forgive. They prefer to run away. They escape into their own alienation from themselves, they escape into their work, they escape into victimhood and masochism. They escape into nothingness and into death.

Homer had understood this three thousand years ago and with his poems he wanted to give us the gift of his deep understanding of this and of his wisdom.

When he talks about Ulysses, he is speaking of himself. When he talks about Penelope, he is still speaking about himself.

I have read many books on Ulysses and especially on the Odyssey, but I still have not found a single author that journeyed inside him or herself to understand what Homer was trying to say about himself and what he wanted to say about the destiny of men and women, of the meaning of life in this universe and of the meaning behind life's belonging to this universe.

Is it possible that the myth of Ulysses is all contained in his hunger for knowledge and in his desire to travel, or in his wish to return home? I have the feeling that the authors I have read up until now all repeat what the others have already said. They see only one aspect of Ulysses. They don't see all his other aspects.

Why is it that no one tries to explain why Ulysses rejects the gift of immortality that Calypso promises him, when everyone knows that Greek mythology is full of personages that aspire only to become immortal?

Why does Homer differentiate himself from the others on such an enormously important point? What is this mystery?

I have found my own answer to this question and I won't repeat it here (see A.M. The Ulysseans, Sophia University of Rome, 2009).

All I will say here is that just as DNA invented its own way to become biologically immortal, through the fusion of male and female chromosomes, Ulysses, through his fusion with the unconquerable Penelope, also invented his own way of reaching immortality. He does this not by becoming a god or a semi-god but by becoming a mythological archetype that will never cease to fascinate human beings.

From this myth we learn that not simply an encounter between the *I* and the *You* of a man and a woman, but a fusion of them, is a way we can give birth to our own immortality and *secondary beauty*.

This is Homer's gift to us; this is, in my opinion, the true essence of the myth of Ulysses, which has still much to be discovered.

Ascetics, hermits and monks dedicated most of their lives to the search for a mystical union with God or to save their souls, which was already immortal but that risk eternal damnation (remember St. Benedict's rule: "Ora et labora" {Pray and Work}).

These people had before them role models of people who searched for the encounter and fusion with the Absolute, but they had no role models of people who look for and create a fusion with a human *You*.

This millenary tradition represented a negative weight on my life for a long time, and it was not easy for me to free myself of it.

To the same degree the search for an angelic woman, which Dante upheld as an ideal, caused me much damage.

Ulysses of the Odyssey was of great help to me in changing my perspective.

To propose the fusion of an *I* with a *You* in a time like now where the number of separations and divorces continuously grows can seem like madness.

This might be true, but if extreme evils require extreme remedies, if desperate conditions require impossible ideals, why not decide to not fall into the common pit?

Only by proposing what others dare not to do is a good way to get the hidden resources in human beings to jump to life and help us leap towards impossible and unknown goals.

This is how hominids evolved into humans and this is how every leap forward in the evolutionary process has been achieved.

The mystery of nuclear fusion that gives birth to the stars was revealed to us as the result of years of scientific research. Before that no one knew what it was or even that it existed.

My wife and I described the fusion between an *I* and a *You* in our paper presented at the Sophia University of Rome congress in Assisi in 1987, entitled “*Unificazione ed armonizzazione del principio maschile e del principio femminile*” {The unification and the harmonization of the masculine and feminine principles}, published in the magazine *Persona* n.14 – March 1988, and as a special insert in the paper “Gli Ulissidi” {The Ulysseans}, May 2000.

Here I would like to add another reflection that is important, as it clearly underlines the transformation that happens in Penelope’s heart.

For three years she deceived the Suitors by telling them she was weaving the shroud for Laertes’ funeral:

*And first a god inspired me to weave a shroud,...
... during the day I stayed at my loom weaving
and at night I would unravel everything, with torches for light”.*
(*Od.*, XIX, 138-150)

In these verses we can find a clue about how Penelope prayed. In conflict over whether or not to remain faithful to Ulysses or to get remarried, Penelope asks for help through prayer. A god gives her the idea of the shroud. Prayer and weaving become a single action. But this action is not enough, it only serves to gain some time.

The decisive action takes place when Penelope is speaking to Ulysses who is hiding behind the disguise of a beggar. She has another idea, this too most certainly inspired by her *SELF*, and that is to propose a competition that is connected to a memory she has of Ulysses:

*“...whoever can more easily string the bow with his own hands
and can send the arrow through all twelve rings,
I will choose him, and with him leave this palace...”*
(*Od.*, XXI, 75-78)

Weaving is an exquisitely feminine activity. Stringing a bow is a typically masculine activity and the bow is Apollo’s favorite weapon. Apollo is the god of the arts, and as we know art is always a fusion of opposites.

We could think that the bow is an excellent representation of the fusion between the masculine and the feminine principles, where the curve of the arch symbolizes the feminine and the arrow that flies symbolizes the masculine. The fusion of these two forces, masculine and feminine, makes for maximum efficiency in action.

This competition with the bow will end up being decisive in giving Ulysses the best possible weapon to kill off the Suitors. He would not have had it if Penelope hadn't made this proposal.

Weaving was a deception, proposing the competition with the bow and arrow was the winning action. This shows us that Penelope had changed and she had made an important step forward in becoming a woman and in loving a man.

This is where the creation of *secondary beauty* resides, of a beauty that does not yet exist and that must be created so it does.

Prayer is the servant of this creation.

I like to imagine a new world where human beings devote a lot of time to prayer, not to save their souls, but to give themselves a soul that is truly immortal. I have attempted to explain here that this can happen when we work towards creating a fusion between the *I* and the *SELF* and, afterwards, decide to work towards a final goal of creating a fusion between the *I* and the *You* of a man and a woman.

From nuclear fusion a star is born, and afterwards a whole galaxy of stars is born.

Entire universes emerge from subnuclear fusion.

Vegetable, animal and human life emerge from biological fusion.

These are all living organisms that are born.

From a fusion and not an enmeshment between a man and a woman, that are by nature two beings that are completely opposite, a living super-organism is born. Its life challenges death forever and it goes beyond the time-space dimension of this universe.

Ulysses forgave Penelope many things and Penelope forgave Ulysses for many things (abandonment, betrayal, desire for revenge, deadly plots and a waste of goods).

They have just finished making love, after being separated for twenty years, and they have a whole night ahead during which they can tell each other their stories.

Since they have forgiven each other of everything, they can tell each other everything. Everything can be understood in a totally new light, that goes well beyond good and evil.

Beyond good and evil there is only *secondary beauty*, an energy field that is a synthesis of many opposites, including the opposites of good and evil.

Now that the *I* and the *You* have been fused into One, Ulysses can leave again for the other end of the world, as Teiresias predicted. There is no abandonment, because the *I* and the *You* are a Unit that can now look for Others with whom to create a *Choral SELF*. Everyone can participate in this, no one is excluded. Anyone who wants to can participate in the great project of creating *secondary beauty*.

After all of this, there will finally be the desired return, the “nostos”, and there will be a serene old age. One day, far into the future, physical death will come sweetly, from the sea.

(This paper was presented on October 21st, 2000, during the 21st Group Laboratory of Existential Anthropology of the Sophia University of Rome and it was published for the first time as a special insert of the paper “Giornale degli Ulissidi” {Ulyssean Journal}).

A comment on the presence of the positive mother figure when it is internalized:

There is no such as mothers who are only bad. Every mother has also a positive part and we can find it only if we are capable of listening to our hearts.

Ulysses and the internalized positive mother

In the Odyssey, we find a trace of a prayer made to the positive mother figure when, as advised by Athena, Ulysses goes into Alcinous' palace, walks immediately towards queen Arete, bows down and embraces her legs, begging her to help him.

... “go first to the queen”... says Athena.

*... “if she is in a good humor
then you have hopes of seeing your friends and returning
to your high-ranking home and the land of your forefathers”...*

... “Odysseus threw his arms around Arete's knees”...

This is what Homer says in Book VII.

He had already said something very similar in Book V.

Poseidon had stirred up a violent storm against Ulysses and only the help he receives from the nymph Ino and the goddess Athena save him from sure death. Ulysses sights the land of the Phaeacians but here he is faced with another huge problem.

*... “Woe is me, Zeus has let me glimpse the land I'd lost all hope for
after coming all the way through this abyss
but I see no way out of the frothy sea
only sharp rocks protrude with waves all around
that scream and roar and only one naked stone wall rises up out of them...
(Od.V, 53 and following verses)*

Ulysses is faced with a wall of stone and it isn't the first time that such a thing happens in his life. Ulysses had stone walls before him for ten years while he was at Troy.

Then he was dealing with Troy's city walls and Ulysses found the solution to his powerlessness by using cunning and deceit. This time he is faced with a rocky coastline that keeps him from being able to come to shore. In this case, cunning and tricks won't be of any help to him.

Ulysses has to transform himself, he must completely turn himself upside down and look for a solution through humility and prayer. It's not easy to leave behind his arrogance and find the way of humility. By trying again and again he will finally succeed.

After having been smashed against the rocks several times, Ulysses finally sees the mouth of a river and he prays:

.... "Hear me, Sire, whomever you may be: I believe you must be often called upon, by those escaping Poseidon's wrath by leaving the sea. It is by venerating the immortal gods That a lost man just like me now arrives before your river, at your knees I come, after so much suffering. Have pity on me, sovereign: I am hereby your servant". (Od. V, 445-450)

The river answers his prayer and Ulysses can finally land.

Where Ulysses has landed is at the virtue of humility, a land that was hitherto completely unknown to him. He is the one who says to the sovereign river "I am at your knees"; have pity on me, I am begging you. If Ulysses before had an *arrogant heart* just like the Suitors do, now he becomes capable of having a *humble heart*. His prayer is no longer a way of commanding or winning over the divinity, as it usually is for most.

When Athena advises him to do the same thing with queen Arete, Ulysses is ready to do so. He has already learned that there is not only a negative part within the mother, a devouring part; there is also a positive part, one that is capable of being welcoming and giving.

He manages to get there by following his heart. He gets there by abandoning his determination to hold on to his wounded pride and his refusal to make any changes whatsoever.

He gets there after having been thrown against the rocky shoreline and having risked being smashed to pieces and then deciding to keep on swimming to see if beyond the rocks there is some small beach that he could land on.

This is how Ulysses finds the mouth of the river and sends out his prayer.

There is yet another wall of stone that Ulysses will come up against, and that is when he lands in Ithaca and is faced with Penelope's hardened heart. This time he will need both humility and cunning. He will need the power of hatred and the power of an

immense love, fused together, so he can break down the wall of stone and find a heart of flesh and blood.

Here I would like to reflect on another important element. If going from pride to humility is like passing from one universe to another within the same life dimension we are in, by having Ulysses go from a world full of storms to a world of peace like the one the Phaeacians live in, Homer is telling us that truly our life is made up in such a way that we can go from one universe to another. This is possible if we can stop complaining and accept creatively the “thousand woes” that this life has in store for us; our ability to do so is conditioned by our ability to not act like victims when we are confronted with trouble, but like artists of our lives and of the life of the universe in which we live.

Ulysses’ passage from victim to artist is described in the way Ulysses acts while at Alcinous’ court.

While Demodocus sings about the Trojan war, Ulysses does nothing but cry. He cries for himself and for the thousands of painful experiences the gods have inflicted him with.

Soon after the scene changes: it is no longer the storyteller who is singing, but it is Ulysses. He is no longer crying and he sings about all his misadventures and his trials and tribulations with such art and mastery that the Phaeacians don’t want him to stop, even though it has gotten very late.

Again a comment on “La preghiera degli Ulissidi” {The prayer of the Ulysseans}:

... “For me, prayer, in its most basic form, has meant and still means being able to create a source of light and a source of continuous transformation in my life. A constant journey from lies to truth and authenticity. A way of transforming and unifying my self and my various internal parts. A journey that carries me from ugliness to beauty”...

During his journey from Troy to Ithaca, Ulysses must face continual losses. Every loss can help Ulysses transform a part of himself, if he can understand its meaning and accept it.

... “prayer is an indispensable action if we want to go from living life as thieves to living life as a gift and from living life as violence to living life as a work of art”...

For ten years, beneath and inside Troy’s city walls, Ulysses lived in violence and thievery and he continues to do so when he leaves Troy and attacks the Cicones to steal their goods.

Up until this point he knows nothing about life as a work of art, which demands a continual effort to synthesize opposites and a continual transformation of oneself. He will learn this throughout the rest of his journey, step by step.

Now let’s look at the type of prayer that is most meaningful to me.

... “.. prayeris the best way to accomplish a fusion between the *I* and the *SELF*, the *Personal SELF* and the *Cosmic SELF*”....

The best example of this dialog and the reflection that then leads to action can be seen in what happens between Athena and Ulysses, when he has just landed at Ithaca.

... *“then Athena came near him
with a young man’s body and like a shepherd
delicate and gentle like kings’ sons are”*... (Od. XIII, 221-223)

Athena comes to Ulysses as a human, and since he does not recognize her right away he starts telling her a bunch of lies.

... *“of all the gods
I am famous for wisdom and cleverness
not even you recognized
Pallade Athena, Zeus’ daughter, whom has nevertheless always
through every danger stayed near you and saved you”*... (Od. XIII, 298-301)

Ulysses complains that he hadn’t seen her come on board his ship to save him from having to suffer so much, but Athena forcefully tells him that she has always been near him during every danger and she has always saved him.

This interaction describes a fundamental aspect of the *SELF* as defined by Homer and Cosmo-Art.

The *SELF* is always with us to save us from every danger, but this does not mean that it keeps us from experiencing the pain we need to go through so we can transform ourselves.

It is necessary to have full faith in the *SELF*, that often operates in our favor even though we are unaware of it.

The dialog with the *SELF* must always be cultivated and maintained so we can create the kind of trust that is not just given to us freely, but which must be worked for day after day. When we have this trust, it becomes possible to make plans and put together strategies to help us reach our goals, with the assurance that we are fully supported by the *SELF*.

Ulysses must save his life that is threatened by the Suitors and he must find a way to eliminate them. He must also find a way to make sure Penelope is not dangerous, unless he wants to end up like Agamemnon.

Athena and Ulysses speak at length about this, and they “meditate” and “reflect” on what the best way would be for Ulysses to present himself at the palace and how he can massacre the Suitors.

Athena advises Ulysses to disguise himself as a beggar and Ulysses has to decide to accept this suggestion or not. It is a terribly difficult one to accept and

Homer describes all the pain and humiliation that Ulysses has to undergo by presenting himself as a beggar.

What man would accept to be a beggar in his own house and to patiently take all kinds of harassment from a pretentious wife, just to win her back after a long absence?

Nevertheless, Ulysses accepts to disguise himself as a beggar:

*And speaking thus Athena touched him with a wand;
and she wrinkled his beautiful skin on his agile limbs,
she made his blond hair disappear from his head, she
made his skin like that of an old man,
she made his eyes, once so beautiful, bleary;
and she threw a filthy rag on him as well as a tunic
both ripped and dirty, black from the horrible smoke;
above this she put on a great skin of a swift deer:
she gave him a cane and a torn ugly sack, that he
slung over his shoulders with a rope.
(Od.XIII, 429-438)*

It was important for Ulysses to meet Agamemnon in Hades and learn from him what had happened when he returned to Clytemnestra with all the arrogance of a king returning victoriously after a long battle, full of gold and with Cassandra as his slave.

When he got off the ship a red carpet was laid out for him to walk on, but when he entered the house he was killed by his wife's lover, Aegisthus, as is mentioned in the first verses of the Odyssey.

Agamemnon's arrogance (and he indeed had an arrogant heart) is in contrast with Ulysses' humility, and Ulysses manages to become so by maintaining prayer-dialog with Athena.

The shift from having an *arrogant heart* to becoming capable of having a *humble heart* is one of the most difficult changes a human being must undergo, if he or she wants to live with wisdom and be able to create *secondary beauty*.

Arrogance can not be transformed by arrogance, pride cannot be won over with more pride. We are all born arrogant and prideful and we create conflict all throughout our lives. It takes a lot of strength and above all a lot of humility to change ourselves and it is very difficult to blend strength and humility.

The dialog between Athena and Ulysses is followed up by action and the action is: to accept to transform himself into a beggar and to accept to be deeply humiliated by the Suitors and even by the servants. This is not an easy thing to accept: it is a very bitter task. The strength necessary to be able to accept it can be found through prayer, through the special type of prayer that is a fusion between the *I* and the *SELF*.

I will again take a quote from “*La preghiera degli Ulissidi*” {The prayer of the Ulysseans}:

The fusion between the *I* and the *SELF* ... “is not an end in itself. Its purpose is to transform the *I* and to create a fusion between the *I* and the Life of the Cosmos, between the *I* and *You* of a man and a woman. This last fusion is the most difficult to achieve for human beings. As history shows us, not only is not everyone capable of realizing it, but many are downright against it”...

For example, all of those who, both in the East and the West, invented vows of chastity and have affirmed that living as monks is a life as perfection, whereas instead being married is a second-class lifestyle that keeps one from reaching perfection, are opposed to it.

Before Ulysses departs for Troy he and Penelope experience a symbiosis, but now, after twenty years of being apart, Penelope is full of a deep pain as a result of having been abandoned. She also is full of a concealed hostility towards him.

She is also obstinately opposed to growing up and becoming a woman capable of loving a man, but she is not very aware of this.

It really is quite nice to be courted by one hundred suitors and not have to ever decide who she will choose among them. It's nice to be able to deceive them by weaving her tapestry by day and unraveling it by night. She gets a subtle pleasure from maneuvering them with her tricks and at the same time knowing they will kill Ulysses for her, if he should ever return.

Up until this point there really is not much difference between Agamemnon's Clytemnestra and Ulysses' Penelope. One of them is consciously plotting her husband's murder while the other is plotting using a wily ambivalence, typical of those who do not want to get their hands dirty and be fully responsible for their actions.

Penelope's ambivalence is mentioned for the first time in Book I of the Odyssey, when Telemachus encounters Athena:

She neither refuses the hated nuptials, nor does she have the courage to go through with them; in the meantime the Suitors are ruining my house with their banquets and soon they will tear me to pieces as well».(Od. I, 249-251)

But Penelope herself tells Ulysses, who is still disguised as a beggar, that her heart breaks during the day and at night she is overcome by thousands of fears and doubts:

and so my heart as well jumps here and there with opposing emotions whether to stay with my son and faithfully protect every thing, my wealth, my slaves, the tall and great palace, being respectful of the nuptial bed and the talk of the people; or whether to just follow the most noble of the Achaeans,

*the one who best courts me in my palace and offers me endless gifts .
(Od. XIX, 524-529)*

Ulysses' cunning and intelligence help him out in many ways but in many situations they are ineffective all by themselves.

He needs continuous help from Athena as well as sometimes directly from Zeus himself. Their intervention is the result of Ulysses' constant prayers to them.

CHAPTER XXIV

REFLECTIONS ON HADES

Many explanations can be given regarding Ulysses' descent into Hades. The one that convinces me the most is that Hades represents the place where humanity's deepest guilty feelings are kept and whose existence is not even imagined.

According to Freud, the unconscious has no bottom, but if it had one that is where the guilty feelings that determine and oppress the lives of human beings would reside.

Homer is right when he attributes to Ulysses the ability to go into the realm of the dead only after he has spent time with the sorceress Circe.

It takes a magical sorceress to be able to go into the most hidden depths of humanity and be able to encounter them as if they were the shadows of death or the shadow of Teireisias.

The shadows of the dead are the traces left behind from the passions and the false ideals that human beings allow to govern their lives.

Achilles who cries over having sacrificed his life for the glory of war; Ajax who lost his mind from having become a slave to his need for revenge; Agamemnon who, with immense stupidity, sacrificed himself and others because of his arrogance; the Suitors (book XXIV) who put their infinite, arrogant demands in first place in their lives; and then the endless line of all of those who lived for vanity and for ephemeral things.

Each shadow is a reflection of Ulysses and it is a mirror in which he can look and learn about all the dark sides of his personality, as well as all the facets of the guilty feelings that are created because of that very darkness.

Teireisias sums them all up and he can predict the future because he knows what he is guilty of and what the guilty feelings, that his culpableness generates, really are.

This is what governs the life of human beings in the present and in the future and it will continue to be that way until each person decides to look at them directly and purify themselves of them.

Guilty feelings do not have to do only with a culpability that is either only imagined or acted out. They also have to do with Promethean guilt. To those types of culpabilities, that is, that are considered such because they break the rules set by the gods.

And who are the gods?

Nature? The mother? The clan? Tradition? Conformity? The laws of the State?

In the case of Ulysses, on one hand there is a god, Poseidon, who tries to keep him from getting home so as to get revenge on him for the fact that he blinded his son, Polyphemus. On the other hand, though, there are other gods, including Zeus, who want Ulysses to be able to get home.

So, is Ulysses guilty or not?

He is both guilty and innocent. The Aristotelian logic of “either or” here does not work.

What works is the logic of the presence of opposites.

Anyone who is familiar with the tragedy “Antigone” knows that Creon, the king of Thebes, has emanated a law which forbids that anyone who died while fighting against Thebes can be buried. Among these are Eteocles and Polyneices, Antigone’s brothers.

Antigone decides to give her brothers a proper burial, following the law of the heart and disobeying the law of the State.

For Creon, Antigone is guilty and she must be punished with death. We all know, instead, that Antigone is innocent and that she was absolutely right in following the law of her conscience, against the law of the state, even at risk of losing her life. Antigone was killed.

When a law is unjust, if we do not obey such a law we are not culpable. For this reason Antigone is not guilty, nor is Ulysses guilty for having opposed the maternal law represented by Poseidon.

But Ulysses is guilty of all the hatred that he has carried inside himself against his mother since prenatal life, hatred that he has nurtured against her for her wanting to dominate him. He is guilty for this hatred until he frees himself of it.

Regarding the mother who wants to dominate her son, Homer gives us a vivid picture through Circe’s actions, when she transforms Ulysses’ companions in swine and she takes any type of human power away from them. He does the same when he describes how Calypso keeps Ulysses prisoner on her island.

Polyphemus is the first devouring mother that Ulysses encounters during his voyage. Poseidon, who is Polyphemus’ father besides being the god of water, is another representation of the phallic, omnipotent mother who wants to impose her will to dominate her son at any cost.

By opposing the mother, a child opposes the absolute god that the mother represents for him or her, and this is an unpardonable wrong that becomes inscribed in the deepest parts of the child.

Anyone who wants to become a free human being must free themselves of these guilty feelings. To do so one must go down into Hades, into the deepest depths of one’s psyche. That is where we can find our hatred against the mother and that is also where we can find our complicity with the mother. This, too, is something we are guilty of.

Every culpability generates its own guilty feelings but what comes up to the surface are the guilty feelings and not what we are really guilty of.

Circe made Ulysses' descent into Hades possible.

What does the sorceress Circe symbolize? The depth of feminine wisdom?

Of the enormous ability that a woman has to transform a man into either a beast or, to the contrary, into a hero that can win over maternal power?

To be able to unravel my own guilty feelings I received great help by listening over and over to a recording by Louise Hay. She insists that we must come into contact with our hatred and decide to dissolve it through forgiveness.

This forgiveness is not a condoning of the actions of the other but it is a decision to detach from hatred, out of love for oneself.

Every time I am afraid of what others can do to me or of what I might do to myself, it is this very fear that helps me come into contact with my feelings of guilt and of the punishment that I am expecting.

If I try to understand what true culpability these guilty feelings are pointing out to me, then perhaps I can free myself of it and free myself also of my guilty feelings.

To free oneself of maternal domination and to accomplish one's own personal life purpose instead of the maternal one is a Promethean culpability. It also generates deep feelings of guilt.

Ulysses' Promethean guilt is that of freeing himself of the mother and of accomplishing the cosmic goal of *secondary beauty*.

It isn't easy to free oneself only through love; often hatred is mixed in with love and this creates guilt.

Today it is not necessary to encounter the sorceress Circe and make use of her esoteric wisdom to descend into Hades. It is sufficient to enter into a conflictual intimate relationship. No one like a woman has the power to provoke and exasperate a man.

And when a man reaches the very bottom of his exasperation, he is right there in Hades, where he can either face his destruction or find his salvation.

Either the man reacts with extreme violence against his wife or against himself, or he becomes capable of encountering the Teireisias that he has inside himself, asking himself about the origins of his profound hatred and how he can resolve it, step by step.

When a woman reaches the point of completely exasperating a man, acting herself in reaction to her feelings of guilt, all the ancient hatred that has been accumulated towards the phallic mother re-emerges, along with homicidal urges and a need to get revenge. When this happens, it is necessary to call upon all of one's strength and all of one's wisdom so as to avoid acting on this homicidal urge against the woman, who has become only a maternal projection both for the man and the woman. This is true because women, too, are full of hatred towards their mothers but they are rarely aware of it.

It is difficult to get one's hurt pride under control, it's difficult to decide to forgive, it's difficult to decide to create *concordance* and beauty and not more ugliness.

Only when the goal to create beauty has become a strong inner value is it possible to forgive in the name of beauty.

And this is what Ulysses did, as Homer described and not as in other versions of the myth of Ulysses, where it is told that Ulysses kills Penelope as soon as he returns to Ithaca.

CHAPTER XXV

THE HYBRIS OF ULYSSES

Homer, and the Greeks before him, had a very clear concept of the kind of arrogance that human beings tend to have and that destroys the most sacred values in human life.

In the depths of their wisdom, they knew that whoever was culpable in this manner would, sooner or later, be severely punished by the gods.

The Greek literature that was produced after Homer never loses sight of this wisdom and the Greek tragedies are the works that best describe it.

Homer knows that Ulysses is not exempt from being guilty of hybris, but in contrast to the other authors of tragedies, he follows the whole path that his hero Ulysses must travel so he can make the passage from hybris to its opposite, which is humility.

Homer clearly shows Ulysses' hybris when, just after leaving the Cyclops' cave, Ulysses sarcastically yells out the name of who it was that just blinded and deceived him, stealing his herd of sheep.

BOOK IX

*But since we were far away, at the distance of a shout,
I shouted words of derision to the Cyclops:*

All of the wrath that Ulysses had repressed while he was in the cave now returns in full, and Ulysses violently hurls it against Polyphemus.

*"Cyclops, in your deep cave with your violent strength,
you did not tear apart the companions of a weakling,
the crime was bound to turn against you,
mad you were to dare eat your guests;
for this Zeus and the other gods have punished you". (Od. IX, 475-479)*

Polyphemus responds to Ulysses' wrath with an even greater rage and he throws the top of a mountain at Ulysses' ship.

*As I was saying: the one who was boiling with rage in his heart even more;
ripped off the top of an enormous mountain and threw it,
right in front of the blue ship's prow,*

*almost striking the tiller.
The sea swelled up when the boulder fell in;
the ship was grabbed by the wave and taken back to the beach,
the sea brought it back to land.
But I grabbed a long pole,
and I pushed it sidewise: calling to my companions I ordered them
to grab the oars so we could escape the danger,
making gestures with my head; they rowed with all their might. (Od.IX, 480-490)*

Ulysses manages to save his ship and then he throws more poisonous words full of hybris at Polyphemus.

His companions beg him to calm down but he has no intention of listening to them. His arrogant heart must win and annihilate his enemy.

This is a taste of human insanity, Homer is saying between the lines, and while it is true that Ulysses is among the wisest of the Greek princes, it is also true that Ulysses is full of arrogance and hybris and he will have to suffer greatly to rid himself of this madness.

*But when we had gone twice the distance at sea,
I again spoke to the Cyclops: around me my companions
held me back with honeyed words:
“Wicked one, why are you provoking the wild man?”*

Far from using honeyed words, his companions call him “wicked” and they beg him to not provoke the Cyclops, speaking of their fear of death. But Ulysses, all wrapped up in his hybris, is deaf to their pleas and does not listen. Isn’t this exactly what happens over and over again in human relationships, when one’s hybris gets into conflict with the hybris of the other?

*and just then by throwing a boulder into the sea he brought the ship
back to land, and we were sure we were about to die.
If he hears you speak or yell anymore,
he will surely smash our heads and the ship as well,
with some big piece of rock; he can throw so far!”
That is what they said to me, but they could not persuade my magnanimous
heart,
and I again spoke to him with rage in my soul:
“Cyclops, if by chance any mortal should ever ask you
why your eye has been so horribly blinded,
answer that the destroyer of fortresses Odysseus did it,
the son of Laertes, whose home is in Ithaca”.(Od. IX, 495-505)*

Ulysses believes he can easily free himself of this crime of insane arrogance by making a sacrifice to Zeus, but Zeus refuses his offering.

The god does not want animal sacrifices, he wants that the heart is transformed. He strikes not to punish, but because through pain human beings can understand their errors and transform themselves.

..... *to Zeus black Chronides cloud, who reigns above all,
I killed the ram and burned its thighs; but he did not want my offering,
and he was already meditating on how all
my solid ships and my faithful companions would perish. (Od. IX, 552-555)*

In this situation Ulysses' companions have committed no crime and it seems incomprehensible why Zeus must make them die. The truth is that Ulysses does not own his guilt and he insanely shifts it on to his companions. How did he know that Zeus did not appreciate his offering?

Did he maybe send some visible sign of his lack of appreciation?

Not at all. But the truth comes from within and it makes no sense to lie to oneself so as to deny it.

It makes no sense, either, to interpret events as one pleases. If Ulysses' companions perish it is due to their own insanity and to their greed, which is clearly shown in the episode describing how the ox-skin is opened and also in the one where despite being warned they kill and eat the Sun god's oxen.

The fact, then, that Ulysses says that Zeus was already meditating on how to make his companions perish is an expression of his own personal idea of a punishing god. This is in open contrast to what Homer affirms from the very first book of the Odyssey, that humans are wrong to think that it is the gods who send them their troubles instead of realizing that they themselves are the cause of their own insanity.

*"Ah, how many wrongs mortals commit towards the gods!
People say that the gods are the ones who send them their troubles, but instead
it's because of their mad crimes against duty that they suffer.*

This is what Zeus says in the counsel of the gods described in the first book. But Ulysses is stubbornly attached to his conviction and this is what he yells again to Polyphemus:

*"Cyclops, in your deep cave with your violent strength,
you did not tear apart the companions of a weakling,
the crime was bound to turn against you,
mad you were to dare eat your guests;
for this Zeus and the other gods have punished you". (Od. IX, 475-479)*

This idea of Ulysses, that it is the gods that punish humans "*for this Zeus and the other gods have punished you*" is one that does not change easily. Yet today it is still deeply instilled in the mentality of those who belong to any type of religious faith, except for Buddhism.

It is true that Poseidon is very angry with Ulysses for having blinded his son Polyphemus, but Zeus says:

*...Poseidon will stop
with his wrath, he certainly won't want
to fight alone against all the immortals! (Od. I, 77-79)*

Also, it is simply not true that he is the one who keeps Ulysses from returning to Ithaca. The exact opposite is true. During the only storm that Poseidon stirs up against Ulysses, not by chance this happens right off the island of the Phaeacians. It will be the Phaeacians themselves, a people devoted to Poseidon, who transport Ulysses to Ithaca on their fastest ship.

These are not contradictions that Homer is unaware of while he is composing his poem.

They are precious indications that should inspire the reader to reflect more deeply on the meaning of the facts that are narrated.

Homer clearly states in three different places that Ulysses suffered immensely because he had to undergo "trials" that he had to face so he could transform himself. Only then would he be capable of accomplishing the great project that Zeus and Athena had entrusted him with and that they could not achieve alone: the creation of *secondary beauty*.

A clear contradiction can also be found in the prayer that Polyphemus says to Poseidon his father:

*"Listen, oh Poseidon who embraces the earth, blue crest:
if I am truly yours and you claim you're my father,
make it so Ulysses, destroyer of fortresses and son of Laertes,
whose reign is in Ithaca, never returns home.
But if fate wishes that he see his friends again and he returns
to his secure home and the land of his fathers,
may at least he arrive late, and with much trouble, after losing
all his companions, and having to return on another's ship
only to find his house full of tragedies".
So he prayed, and the blue crest heard him (Od. IX, 528-536)*

Polyphemus first asks that Ulysses never return home and then, even though it is not clear why, he settles with

*may at least he arrive late, and with much trouble, after losing
all his companions, and having to return on another's ship
only to find his house full of tragedies". (ibid 534-535)*

It's as if all of a sudden he is transformed into a soothsayer and he predicts for Ulysses what Teiresias will later tell him when he is in Hades.

Had Ulysses taken Polyphemus' threats seriously, he would not have had to descend into Hades. At that time, however, his hybris was still too strong and his humility was at absolute zero.

Polyphemus invokes his father Poseidon to help him and, rightly so, Poseidon becomes hostile towards Ulysses because of his hybris.

What surprises me is that after this episode Poseidon actually goes after Ulysses only once throughout the whole poem, and never in such a way so as to kill him as he does with Ajax.

*and Poseidon heard his arrogant words;
and after quickly grabbing his trident with his brawny hands
he struck the Gyrea cliff and broke it in two.
One part stayed in place, the other fell into the sea,
the one that Ajax, so blind, was on,
and it brought him down with it into the infinite swells.
And so he died, swallowing sea water (Od. IV, 505-511).*

It also surprises me that Poseidon strikes at Ulysses, while he is on the raft he built with Calypso's help, just when he has finally arrived right off the coast of the island of the Phaeacians. The Phaeacians end up being those who after just a few days will take him to Ithaca on their fastest ship. Why didn't he ever strike at him before then?

The Phaeacians are faithful to Poseidon and they are aware of a prophecy that says they will be severely punished if they take Ulysses to his island.

What is it that makes them willing to transgress Poseidon's will and why is it that Poseidon allows them to do it, without intervening beforehand?

I don't know how to answer these questions, I am only expressing my surprise.

The storm that Poseidon stirs up against Ulysses is extremely intense and frightening. For two days and two nights Ulysses is full of every kind of anguish and he must face death time and time again.

Athena comes to his rescue, as usual, and she instills wise thoughts in him, but she does not relieve him of his pain. Ulysses must completely accept losing everything he has and everything he is so he can become a new man. But he must, above all, strip himself completely of his hybris, and his pain allows him to process it on a very deep level and forces him to change his old way of being.

He must also strip himself of his hatred towards his mother and he must learn to forgive both her and himself.

This is the wise advice that Athena gives him in that terrible moment.

At this point it would be helpful to look at what I already wrote in my book "*Il mito di Ulisse e la bellezza seconda*" {The Myth of Ulysses and Secondary Beauty} .

"In Poseidon's eyes, Ulysses is guilty not because he blinded Polyphemus but because he would have liked to kill him. Polyphemus is another symbol of the phallic

mother and Ulysses hates the phallic mother, has hated her since his intrauterine experience, and hatred means wanting someone else's death. He does not kill her only because if he would have done so he would have died as well. In Polyphemus' cave Ulysses placates his rage but he does not placate his hatred. He only represses it.

Now the time has come for him to descend into his own depths and to face it in a more definitive way. This is why Poseidon stirs up such a terrible storm and Ulysses can no longer escape from this deeper truth, that Ulysses is an assassin, he's blinded by his hatred and by his wounded pride.

Ulysses is guilty because as soon as he leaves the Cyclops' cave, he fully shows how arrogant he is, how full of hybris he is, as the Greeks would say. The gods do not tolerate any arrogance or hybris in any form.

This is why Ulysses must suffer and must transform himself, and go from being arrogant and self-righteous to becoming humble.

"When Ulysses is caught in the storm he goes through one of the most terrible experiences of his life, as we will see in a bit through the words of Homer.

In the worst moment he receives two forms of help, one from Ino and one from Athena. One form comes from the depths and the other comes from above.

Ino, the daughter of Cadmus and Harmony, is a marine nymph, and she saves Ulysses by giving him a precious veil that placates his fear of death. Athena, Zeus' daughter, runs to the aid of her hero by calming the winds and by whispering to his soul what it is best for him to do. It must be noted, however, that neither one of them exempts him from having to taste the bitterness of the danger of death to the very end.

"Following are the phrases that Homer wrote in book V, where he insists more than once on describing the mortal anguish that overcomes Ulysses:

*I am afraid that the goddess told me the truth,
when she said that before I reached my homeland,
I would have experienced the most painful of times at sea...*

... now (here) the abyss of death is a sure thing for me.

*Oh! If only I had died beneath the walls of Troy...
... Instead my destiny was to be the victim of a miserable death.*

*While he spoke thus, a towering wave broke over him,
With terrible force, and turned the raft around.
Far away from the raft he was thrown and he let go
of the tiller: the mast at the middle broke
under the horrendous gust of fighting winds,
and the sail and boom were thrown far into the sea*

... He was under water a long time, he was unable

to come back to the surface, assaulted by the great wave.

... He finally came up and spit out the salty, bitter water from his mouth, that coursed also down around his head.

... At this point the nymph Ino saw him and felt pity for Ulysses... who was drifting, consumed with anguish... and she said to him:

"... Here, place this veil under around your waist, it's immortal: you won't have to be afraid anymore of pain or death".

This is precious help but the storm still does not cease...

... For two days and two nights; and in the swollen waves he drifted about, and often in his heart he saw death before him.

And when Ulysses finally saw land he was taken over by fear

... that some god would send some huge monster against me from the abyss.

He won't have to fight the sea monster anymore but his suffering has not ended at all:

... There were no safe ports for ships, no bays, there were only sharp crags and rocks and cliffs.

... "Woe is me, Zeus has let me glimpse the land I'd lost all hope for after coming all the way through this abyss but I see no way out of the frothy sea only sharp rocks protrude with waves all around that scream and roar and only one naked stone wall rises up out of them;

... and here came a huge wave that dragged him against the harsh coastline; where his skin would have been torn and his bones smashed, had blue-eyed Athena not whispered in his heart: and leaping he grabbed the rock with two hands, and he clung to it moaning, until the enormous wave receded.

After having been smashed against the rocks several times, Ulysses finally saw the mouth of a river and thus he prayed:

"Hear me, Sire, whomever you may be: I believe you must be often called upon, by those escaping Poseidon's wrath by leaving the sea. It is by venerating the immortal gods That a lost man just like me now arrives before your river, at your knees I come, after so much suffering.

Have pity on me, sovereign: I am hereby your servant”.

*The river heard his prayer and Ulysses found a landing.
...His whole body was swollen, much saltwater poured
from his mouth and nose: without breath or voice
he lay exhausted, prostrated by a terrible tiredness.
(Od. V, 300-457)*

I have insisted on looking at these verses carefully, because it is important to understand how Homer describes with such mastery what happens to all of us when our hatred, that we created and repressed during intrauterine life, suddenly reappears. This happens when life circumstances that we could have never imagined appear out of seemingly nowhere, striking us with fury.

What we must understand is that what appears to belong to the present is instead an event pertaining to the past. It is, rather, a monster from the past that lies buried in the abyss of the psyche and that suddenly jumps on us when we are least expecting it.

When Ulysses gets out of Polyphemus' cave, he clearly shows how much hybris is within him. He is full of arrogance and omnipotence and he is also still full of much hatred. The death, which he saw with his own eyes inside the cave, did not teach him to decide to free himself of all of this.

This is why his hatred returns, under the form of Poseidon, and it attacks him when he is least expecting it.

Ulysses saves himself because the nymph Ino and Athena come to his aid and they inspire him from within.

What do they inspire? That if he does not decide to unravel his hatred against the *devouring, seductive, castrating mother* with *forgiveness*, his hatred will turn against him and he will die a miserable death.

That if he does not abandon his hybris and become humble, no one will either welcome him nor give him a safe place.

Ulysses listens and he understands. His prayer to the river (to Life) is the evidence of his change of heart. In the same manner, the next day he will follow the advice given to him from Nausicaa, when he throws himself at Arete's feet in all humility, just like a son who, having forgiven his mother, can now ask her to help him. At this point a whole new chapter and a whole new life opens up for him, one that was absolutely unthinkable even one day before.

“Many times during our lives we find ourselves, just like Ulysses in the midst of the storm, wracked with the deepest anguish and surrounded by darkness and we have no way of knowing what will happen the next day: an encounter first with Nausicaa and later with her parents and all the Phaeacian princes, who fill Ulysses with gifts and end up taking him straight to his long awaited destination.

We must be able to trust life even when everything seems lost.

“To be able to complete this process of forgiveness, Teireisias had already told Ulysses what he must do. Once he has returned to Ithaca he must leave again and begin a new journey, this time short by sea and long on land, and stop only when he meets someone who will mistake his oar for a winnow. He will then offer some sacrifices to Poseidon and the god will finally be placated. Afterwards, Ulysses will return to Ithaca and will be able to live out a tranquil old age.

We have, rightly so, abolished animal sacrifices, but we cannot exonerate ourselves from offering up our wounded pride if we want to *decide to forgive* deep within ourselves. This can happen only when we become able to communicate, without violence, with those that have hurt us.

This is where the work begun with Sophia-analysis reaches its completion: the person who has unified and made peace with him or herself. Let’s look, however, at how Sophia-Art and Cosmo-Art are interwoven in this process and how they complete it.

Sophia-Art teaches us that every transformation of the *I* is a death that has been overcome. Every passage from one dimension of the *I* to a higher one brings with it the necessity to die to one identity and become willing to receive a whole new one, which is superior to the former one.

Every time Ulysses faces the death of a part of himself so he can be transformed; every time a part of his *fetal I* - that he is powerfully controlled by and that does not allow the *artistic I* to emerge - dies; at every death of his animalistic parts that are based on thievery and violence and that Ulysses carries within himself since he was born, he creates beauty and accumulates it within.

This beauty is an immortal type of beauty because, besides having faced death, it is created through the continuous *synthesis of opposites* that Ulysses is able to create, step by step.

Sometimes there is the synthesis of life and death; sometimes there is a synthesis of love and hatred that creates the *love force*; sometimes there is a synthesis of the *I* with the *SELF*, which is symbolized by Athena who represents wisdom; sometimes it is the synthesis of the *I* with the Cosmos, represented by Zeus; sometimes it is the synthesis of the *I* with the *You*, of the masculine and feminine principles, represented by the female characters that Ulysses encounters during his journey and that are always positively transformed by their meeting him.

By operating a continual *synthesis of opposites* Ulysses acts like an artist who can transform his very life into a work of art.

This work of art contains immortal beauty, which is sometimes visible to the naked eye but which often is visible only to the eyes of the heart”.

Reprinted from “The Myth of Ulysses and Secondary Beauty” pages 16 and following pages.

I would like to add another way of interpreting some of the verses quoted above:

*... and here came a huge wave that carried him against the harsh
coastline;
where his skin would have been torn and his bones smashed,
had blue-eyed Athena not whispered in his heart:
and leaping he grabbed the rock with two hands,
and he clung to it moaning, until the enormous wave receded. (Od. V, 441-
445)*

By reading and re-reading these verses and the ones before them, where Homer talks about the sharp rocks that Ulysses is thrown against, I suddenly thought that here Homer is alluding to what can happen to a fertilized ovum, when, during the time when it tries to attach itself to the walls of the uterus it is not welcomed there. This passage describes the mortal anguish that the *fetal I* must face because it does not know if it will be able to attach itself and live or be rejected and die.

When a mother does not want a child she most certainly does not offer it a welcoming uterus at the time the blastocyst is trying to implant on the uterine wall.

A mother could also very well want to have a child and at the same time be filled with guilt about becoming a mother. This too can make the walls of the endometrium less than welcoming.

If the story that Autolycus forced his daughter Anticlea to spend the night before her marriage to Laertes with Sisyphus is true, what kinds of fears that she could be pregnant must have been bothering her? All of this has an enormous affect on the embryo and it generates anguish and hatred. If the *I* wants to save itself and live, it must put its pain and its wounded pride aside. Only if it does so can it be carried along by the current and reach the mouth of the river, where, with humility and not arrogance, it can pray to be welcomed and come into Life.

It really doesn't matter if the story is true or not. No myth is true like a news story is true, but it is true for the deep truth that it contains. This is the truth that must be explored so it can be extracted from the trappings of the myth around it.

The island of the Phaeacians, for example, does not exist nor did it ever exist. It was invented by the poet to allow him to express a poetic truth, that was hidden and condensed within the invention itself. In the same way, no monster with six heads called Scylla exists, nor does a god named Poseidon exist, nor do any of the other mythological figures mentioned in the Odyssey exist. (Nor do any of the characters invented by Shakespeare or Pirandello or any other author exist).

There is a poetic truth, however, that does exist and it is found at the heart of the myth and at the heart of reality. A poet is one who knows how to recognize such a truth and represent it through art.

Why is it that the Phaeacians are the ones who take Ulysses back to Ithaca, betraying their loyalty to Poseidon?

If Poseidon is the great mother that embraces the Earth with her oceans, this embrace is both mortal and vital. It can give life and it can also give death.

Whether one or the other will be given depends on many factors but most certainly it depends on the presence or absence of hatred in the hearts of human beings and on the right relationship between love and hatred that they have towards their mother.

Hatred towards the mother begins as early as prenatal life in response to the trauma the fetus experiences during that phase.

This hatred can be followed by a need for revenge and eventual self destruction, or the choice to forgive and to save oneself.

Ulysses, when he is off the island of the Phaeacians, relives his trauma and he relives his hatred. If he dissolves his hatred through forgiveness he can save himself, otherwise he will die.

Arrogance, self-righteousness and repressed hatred all belong to the *fetal I*, which often invades the *adult I* and forces it to bend to its wishes.

Nausicaa gives Ulysses some precious advice:

*But as soon as you will have entered the house and courtyard,
cross the great room and go near my mother:
she sits near the fireplace, in the light of the flames,
twirling her purple spindle, a delight to see,
as she leans against a pillar: her servants sit behind her.
Right next to her is the throne of my father,
who drinks wine, sitting, and looks like an immortal god.
Walk past him and embrace the knees of our mother,
and you will see the day of your return approach
with joyous speed, even though you come from far away.
If she takes a liking to you,
then you have hopes of seeing your friends again and of returning
to your high-ranking home and the land of your forefathers" (Od. VI, 303-315).*

Embracing the mother's knees is a gesture of humility and Ulysses is more than willing to do so after he has transformed himself.

Humility and forgiveness make the mother become well disposed and Ulysses can be hopeful that he will see his homeland again.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE OX-SKIN OF WINDS AND THE POISON OF ENVY

We have already mentioned some of the poisons, and what we must discuss now are envy and greed.

We'll pick up again the theme of envy that we already touched on when we looked at how Ulysses deals with a Phaeacian prince who belittles him, so we can develop it more completely.

To do so we must reflect carefully on the whole story that Ulysses tells about his encounter with Aeolus, the god of the winds.

This story contains some clear elements that can help us understand very well how immense Ulysses' envy is, as well as that of his companions.

Book X, 19-79

*He gave me an ox-skin, that he had made after skinning a nine year old ox,
that he had forced howling hurricanes into;
because Chronide made him god of the winds,
and he can stir them up or stop them as he pleases.
He tied the ox-skin onto the ship with a silver, sparkling
chain, so no winds could possibly escape;
only the Zephyr's wind he sent to blow behind us,
so it would move the ships and us with them; but it did not get us
to our destination: **we perished, because of our madness.**
We sailed day and night for nine days in a row,
on the tenth we glimpsed the fields of our fatherland,
we were so close we could see men sitting around campfires.
Since I was exhausted sweet sleep overtook me;
I had been at the tiller the whole time, never giving it up
to any of my companions, so we could get home sooner;
and my companions started speaking among themselves,
and said I was taking gold and silver home with me,
gifts from magnanimous Aeolus, son of Hippotes.
And so one of them said to another sitting nearby:
"Look at how he is loved and honored by all men,
whose lanes and cities he visits.
He is bringing home from Troy many beautiful treasures
as his booty; instead we, who have travelled the same road,
are going home with empty hands.
Now he has received this as well out of friendship
from Aeolus; come then, let's look at what's in it,
how much gold and silver the ox-skin contains".*

This is what they said and the companions' bad idea overcame them all:

they opened the ox-skin: all the winds rushed out, and suddenly a hurricane grabbed them, and took them back out to sea, weeping, far from our homeland. In that moment I awoke, and I had a moment's hesitation in my noble heart about whether or not I should throw myself from the ship and drown, or suffer in silence, and stay among the living.

I suffered and remained, but I lay wrapped in my cape on the floor of the ship; the ships were taken by the evil storm back to the Aeolian island, and my companions wept.

Then, since we were satiated by food and wine,

I took a herald and one of my companions,

I walked towards Aeolus' noble palace; and I found him seated at a banquet, next to his wife and children.

We entered the house, near the columns, and we sat at the doorstep; and they were very surprised and asked us:

"Why have you come back, Odysseus? What hateful demon has come after you?

We prepared your voyage with great care,

so you would return to your homeland, or wherever you wanted to go".

This is what they said; and I responded with my heart full of anguish:

"My malicious companions along with cruel sleep have both ruined me.

But fix it, dear ones, you have the power to do so".

This is what I said, invoking them with sweet words:

they all fell silent: but the father responded with these words:

"Get off my island, immediately, shame of the living!

It is not right that I help or accompany

a man who is hated by the holy gods.

Go away, for it is because the immortals hate you that you have returned".

And thus saying he threw me out of the house, and I was moaning deeply.

Afterwards we sailed away with our hearts shattered.

The hearts of the men at the tiring oars was heavy,

because of our madness: we had no one else to help us.

At first sight it could seem that here Homer is talking about Ulysses' companions' envy towards him, but this is not the whole truth.

We could ask ourselves: why doesn't Ulysses tell his companions what the gift from Aeolus really is? Why did he have to keep it a secret and keep his companions in the dark about it all?

Why did Ulysses have to stay at the tiller for nine days and nine nights, without ever having someone take turns with him?

Ulysses is responsible for having kept quiet and for having put his companions in such a position as to be tempted to release all the envy they held within themselves.

The truth is that Ulysses, who has been envious his whole life because he is only the king of a poor, small island, is pleased to incite others' envy and to feel that he is envied.

While he stays at the tiller of his ship for nine days and nine nights without interruption, he must have enjoyed at length the feeling of being envied.

On the tenth day, when they have already glimpsed the coastline of Ithaca, he suddenly falls asleep and therefore cannot see what his companions are plotting.

Here the story deviates from the truth. If Ulysses falls asleep, he could no longer hold the tiller, and it is simply not possible that no one notices that the ship is drifting because he has fallen asleep.

While it is true that envy makes us blind, it is also true that whoever sees that a boat is drifting off course would most certainly either run to awake Ulysses, or else take over the tiller and save his own life.

Things must have gone differently but Ulysses has trouble fully admitting his part of responsibility. As a result he changes the story so that it is convenient for him.

Following are the phrases that clearly show how Ulysses sometimes recognizes his own responsibility and other times he puts it all onto his companions or, worse still, onto the gods.

At the beginning of his story he says:
... *"we perished because of our madness"*.

Also at the end of the story he says:
... *"because of our madness we had no one else to help us"*.

'Because of our madness' means everyone's madness and not just his companions' envy and madness. Here he recognizes that everyone is responsible.

But when Ulysses tells about Aeolus' reaction of disgust, where he tells Ulysses he will not give him any more help, the fault lies not on Ulysses' and his companions' madness but on the hatred that the gods have towards Ulysses. It is the fault of the hatred that the gods feel towards him, not the madness of envy. This is a great way to avoid owning responsibility and handing it over to the gods.

Half way through the story Ulysses says to Aeolus:
"My malicious companions along with cruel sleep have both ruined me".
Here the guilty ones are only the malicious companions and cruel sleep.

Aeolus responds:
*"Get off my island, immediately, shame of the living!
It is not right that I help or accompany
a man who is hated by the holy gods.
Go away, for it is because the immortals hate you that you have returned"*.

Ulysses tried to tell one of his many lies made up of half truths but Aeolus immediately shuts him up and sends him away empty handed, or worse: **And thus saying he threw me out of the house...** reader, try yourself a minute to feel all the pain of being kicked out of the house.

Now let's look at how Ulysses reacts when he understands the entity of the disaster:

***“and I had a moment's hesitation in my noble heart
about whether or not I should throw myself from the ship and drown”***

Ulysses' first reaction is to want to kill himself by throwing himself into the sea and drowning.

Many prefer to kill themselves or kill someone else rather than admit that they are guilty of something.

In this reaction of Ulysses the suicidal urge powerfully comes forth. This urge is very common among those who are faced with pain and powerlessness (In Italy in 2004 there were 58,000 suicides).

The second reaction is to decide to

*“suffer in silence, and stay among the living.
I suffered and remained, but I lay wrapped in my cape
on the floor of the ship; the ships were taken by the evil storm”...*

Ulysses does not speak about his anger towards his companions. As he is aware of his own responsibility for what has happened, he asks himself whether he should just kill himself or whether he should continue to suffer in silence. Why in silence? Wouldn't it have been right to have his companions reflect on the grave damage that envy had caused?

Ulysses holds his tongue because he knows full well that he is the first among them to be suffering the effects of envy and thus he has no right to speak. Yet it would be so easy to place the blame on his companions and decide to punish them. At that time, Ulysses still had twelve ships and it would have been easy to send his companions to another ship and put together a new crew.

He instead decides to suffer in silence and this is one of those decisions that make a man into a hero and a role model to be followed.

It is a terrible thing when you feel you have been struck and you decide to stay alive and suffer in silence. Only a few have the courage to act in this manner.

Envy truly is a “*hateful demon*” and no one is free of becoming a victim of this demon. Very few, however, know how to deal with it.

After a first reaction of profound disorientation, Ulysses comes to realize that the pain caused by envy must be experienced fully, in silence and with full responsibility for the part that regards only himself.

CHAPTER XXVII

A CLOSER LOOK AT ENVY

I have already looked at envy in two of my books: *“La vita come opera d’arte e la vita come dono spiegata in 41 film”*, {Life as a Work of Art and Life as a Gift Explored in 41 Films}, (Published by the Sophia University of Rome (S.U.R.), Rome, 1995), where I published a long comment on the movie *“The Bodyguard”*; and then in *“La nascita della cosmo-art”*, {The Birth of Cosmo-Art}, in a laboratory dedicated to the theme of greed and envy.

With the help of the images of a film many of our darker parts can be understood much better than with only words.

From the first book:

Sophia-Artistic interpretation of the movie: **“The Bodyguard”** by Mick Jackson.

...
“The internal conflict
between positive and negative energies
is an every day story
and belongs to every human being
in every moment of their life.
The ferocious beasts that Dante encounters
“halfway along his life's path”
can be encountered on every street corner.
In those moments,
who can we ask for help and protection?
I know
of no better “bodyguard”
than the *Personal and Cosmic SELF*
but this bodyguard
cannot be rented.
The relationship between the *I* and the *SELF*
is a relationship that must be built
day after day,
intimately and with regularity.
Only then can we entrust ourselves
and have a peaceful night’s sleep.

The movie’s storyline is very simple. Rachel Marron, interpreted by Whitney Houston, is a successful singer. Her success attracts fans but, for as long as the world has turned, it also attracts others’ envy. Blood ties and the affection of one’s siblings are definitely not a guarantee or a protection against envy, as we might like to think.

To the contrary, they often multiply and amplify the suffering of those who are dominated by envy and are right near us.

This is what happens to Niki, Rachel's older sister, who, unable to tolerate the humiliation and the pain that it causes her to not be at the center of success, hires a professional killer and pays him handsomely to kill her sister.

A maniac is also brought in to the story, who writes letters to the singer threatening to kill her: *"You have everything, I have nothing, so you must die"*. This is the message that is repeated over and over again.

These threats convince the singer that she must overcome her reluctance and accept the presence of a bodyguard. In the beginning she doesn't handle his presence very well, and treats him with arrogance and ambivalence.

It will take many steps and many changes until the singer decides to truly entrust herself to the bodyguard that they have chosen for her, Frank Farmer, interpreted by Kevin Kostner.

It is not an easy thing to step away from the mistrust and disdain that are part and parcel of a proud and arrogant personality, one that looks down its nose at others.

To humble oneself before life and accept the gift of someone who wants to protect you from danger, while risking his own life, requires a huge change. Rachel gets there a little bit at a time, with many fluctuations.

And when she finally decides to completely entrust herself, she must accept even more sacrifices.

She must give up her tour, her press conference, the comfort of her mansion. She must hide out in the mountains, in a secret place. And this place ends up being not so secret after all, since her sister Niki, who is above all suspicion, is always with Rachel.

The killer, in fact, easily finds Rachel's hiding place and his presence becomes known first through the use of dynamite, that almost kills the singer's son, and then through a fatal blow that kills Niki instead of Rachel.

Destructive envy inevitably turns against the one who acts upon it.

This is a law of life that cannot be denied.

It is only a question of time.

A few seconds before she is killed, Niki tells Farmer that it was she who hired the killer to murder her sister. She also tells him that the words written on the threats corresponds exactly to what she thinks, even though she was not the one to send them: her sister has everything and she has nothing. This is why she decided that her sister must die.

She herself was a singer, but her sister was kissed by success and she was not. Her sister stole her place on the stage and she stole her success: for this reason it is perfectly fair to hate her and kill her. If Niki was unsuccessful it is only fair that Rachel can't have success either.

This is how envious people think. This is how greedy people think. Because envy comes from greed and greed comes from a refusal to accept what one has and what one is, and run after what one is not and what one has not and that is wanted so badly one is willing to do anything to get it.

Greed comes from the inability to recognize one's value, whether it be small or big, and from the choice to act in life as though one were *a bottomless pit*, where everything that life puts in is dissipated into nothingness.

Greed is an ugly beast, envy is an ugly beast.

They are the worst ways we can express our hatred towards life and towards ourselves.

How can we possibly say that life has given everything to others and nothing to us? Not even a *clochard*, a homeless person, would think this way, otherwise they would take their own life instead of living under one of the bridges over the Seine.

If we believe something like this we can only be blind and stupid. But blindness and stupidity are so great, says the director Kurosawa in his beautiful film "RAN", that they are common attributes among people who are intelligent, just imagine among those who are not!

One week after Niki's funeral, Rachel receives an Oscar nomination, which is something she had wished for all her life.

And here we are at the heart of the story. The killer has not yet been found and the Oscar ceremony could be a great opportunity for him to hide amongst the crowd and shoot a fatal bullet.

The tension grows. Rachel knows she is in danger but she still hesitates between her love for herself and her love of glory. She is still fluctuating between the arrogance of someone who believes that she is entitled to everything, including glory, and the humility of one who decides to entrust herself to life, and by doing so become capable of receiving the gift of an Oscar without spoiling it, because she knows how to receive it and welcome it *as a gift*.

In the exact moment when Rachel is receiving the Oscar, the killer pretends he is using a video camera and he shoots. Had Farmer the bodyguard not been ready to jump between Rachel and the killer, the bullet would have struck and probably killed her.

Was her salvation simply lucky or did she build it with tenacity and love?

I haven't yet mentioned that Rachel fell in love with Farmer and Farmer fell in love with her.

For an inattentive spectator, this love could easily be seen as being a simple distraction invented by the director, to mix together love and suspense. I believe, instead, that it is the key of the whole film.

If Rachel loves herself, if Rachel loves her positive parts, if Rachel loves her *SELF*, then Rachel can win over her negative parts, her greed, her arrogance and her destructive envy, despite what Niki will be able to do with her own negative parts.

If Rachel loves herself, she will then be able to handle the tremendous weight of glory instead of succumbing to it like Elvis Presley or Kurt Cobain or many others have.

Frank Farmer, the bodyguard, becomes a symbol or a manifestation of this love and of the love that the *SELF* is capable of giving to those that welcome it into their lives, and love it in return.

This can explain why the film does not end with a wedding between Rachel and Farmer. This was not a love story with a happy ending. It was instead a story about the battle and conquest that every human being must undergo and achieve so they can learn to love authentically themselves; so they can learn to approach life with humility and be able to welcome and appreciate its generous gifts by winning over envy and overcoming greed.

HOW CAN WE CURE OUR ENVY?

❖ With the art of playing with complaining

If the greed that consumes us and the anger and pain that we feel because of the envy we harbor towards others is great, how great will our complaints be and how long will they continue?

We cannot expect to immediately stop feeling greed and envy, but we can stop complaining, if we decide to begin loving ourselves and transform ourselves.

Play and self-irony are wonderful ways to stop our complaining and concentrate our energies in creative and transformative endeavors.

The *game of complaining* consists of tapping into each one's ability to emphasize their complaints, allowing themselves to do so and to compete with others to see who is best at complaining and joke about it in a group context.

Knowing how to go from complaining to be able to laugh at oneself is an art, and it must be practiced.

Self-irony allows us to detach from ourselves and our wounds and from the narcissistic need to lick them forever. Once we have decided to detach from our wounds, the energy contained in our pain can be transformed into creative energy, if we truly are willing to give up sadomasochistic pleasure and choose the pleasure of creating new beauty.

❖ With the dialog between the *I* and the *SELF*

In the West, the *SELF* is almost completely unknown; in the East it is considered to be that unreachable and transcendent reality that everyone is looking for and that the *I* must dissolve itself into by eliminating all of its desires, unless one wants to have to eternally reincarnate.

I have already spoken of the *SELF* in other books of mine and in a series of previous articles, and my description of it is quite different from the way that it is commonly described in the Orient.

Since I suspect that few have understood and grasped the meaning of this little known reality, and this concerns me, I will touch on this subject off and on in the future as well.

We are immersed in a cosmic web that, for some, is only a spider's web where events happen by chance. These events can be fortunate or unfortunate, according to one's point of view. One can look from the standpoint of the spider or of a fly: for the fly the events are unfortunate, for the spider they are fortunate.

For others, instead, and they are the ones who believe in the reality of the *SELF*, there are no events that happen by chance. Everything happens with synchronicity because there is a project that is behind it all. We are not speaking, however, of divine providence.

The synchronicity that is seen in the outside world corresponds to the synchronicity of our inner world.

Sometimes this happens because the *I* learns about its inner reality thanks to the events that occur in its outer one, and other times it happens because the *I*, stimulated by the *SELF*, manages to take steps forward and make the changes it must so it can pass from a lower evolutionary stage to a higher one.

The *SELF*, in fact, speaks both within ourselves and from outside ourselves. It continuously stimulates the *I* so it can make a synthesis between the internal and the external worlds and vice-versa. This allows for continual fertilization and continual birthing, after a proper period of gestation has elapsed.

This way of thinking can be embraced by those who believe they can be perfected and not by those who believe they are perfect, as do those who are passively governed by an ideal of perfection. This ideal of perfection is an arrogant demand that perfection exist and it is not a constant search for a way to become perfect.

Only those who want to continually improve themselves are interested in the dialog between the *I* and the *SELF*. Those instead who believe they have already arrived at being perfect, and who feel threatened by anyone who does not agree with them, are not interested in this type of dialog.

This is why when anything happens in my life I always ask myself: "what is it that the *SELF* wants from me?"

Obviously the answer does not come immediately, right after I ask the question, but if I continue asking, and I am open to receiving the answer - no matter how uncomfortable it might be at times - most certainly the answer will come.

Cosmologists affirm that the Universe is continually expanding. I affirm that the Universe is growing, and that not only do I grow with it, but it also grows with me.

I need to improve myself continuously, because the Universe needs to continuously improve and it cannot do it without me.

The *SELF* is not at the service of only my wellbeing, but of my wellbeing and the wellbeing of the entire Universe.

The Universe is a living organism, just like my own body is and myself along with it. It does not make sense to imagine that my cells, and I am a cell of the Universe, can imagine their own wellbeing by separating themselves from the wellbeing of the whole body that they belong to.

Were they to do so it would be like developing a cancer.

I must continually improve myself, otherwise it would be like becoming a cancer, it would mean death. Greed and envy are some of the many cancers that bring death along with them.

In my dialog with the *SELF* I can learn how to win over cancerous substances and how to allow more space for vital processes that increase my being, that help me reach a fullness of existence, and that are gifts not just for me but for the whole Universe.

Now, let's use our imaginations and pretend that Niki, the singer's sister, knew about the reality of the *SELF* and about the dialog she could have developed with her *SELF* when, dominated by the passion of envy, she felt a homicidal urge against her sister rise up inside herself.

Had she asked her *SELF*, "What is it that you want from me?", do you think she would have received as an answer, "Go, and hire a killer; you might as well because there is no way to get away from homicidal urges once they have exploded within you"?

If anything, these are thoughts that come from the *I* and not from the *SELF*. They come from an *I* that is isolated within itself and can see no further than the tip of its own nose; they come from an *I* that does not know hope; they come from an *I* that does not know how to pray or whom to pray to.

The cells of my body pray, when they are sick, and they cause me pain so I will do something to help them feel better.

It's true that I am not always capable of doing something to help them, but I often can if I take action in that direction.

Now why would what works between my cells and my *I* not work between my *I* and my *SELF* , where my *SELF* transcends my *I* just as my *I* transcends my cells?

Do I want to create a dialog with my *SELF* ?

Do I want to transform this dialog into prayer, when necessary?

Everyone can do with their lives whatever they want.

Don't allow yours to become a piece of the Universe that has gone mad".

Reprinted from "La vita come opera d'arte e la vita come dono spiegata in 41 film" {Life as a Work of Art and as a Gift Explained in 41 films}, (Published by the Sophia University of Rome, S.U.R., Rome, 1995) pp.219-226.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE SUN GOD'S CATTLE AND ULYSSES' GREED

It would seem that Homer is not speaking of Ulysses' greed but only of his companions', but if we analyze the story of what happens on the island of Thrinacia closely, we can see that this is not the case.

When Ulysses descends into Hades, Teiresias warns him carefully about what kind of danger awaits him when he reaches the island of Thrinacia.

*but even like this, suffering pain, you'll be able to arrive,
if you want to control your heart and the heart of your companions,
when you will steer your solid ship
to the island of Thrinacia, safe from the violet sea,
and you'll find the cattle and hearty flocks of sheep
grazing there belonging to the sun god, who sees and hears
everything from above.
If you will leave them alone, and think of your return
to Ithaca, even though you'll suffer, you will get there:
but **if you steal** them then I pronounce the end
of your ship and your companions. As for you, if you survive,
late and with much trouble will you get home, after having lost
all your companions (Od. XI, 104-114).*

Teiresias says that Ulysses "must control his heart" and not just the hearts of his companions. And then he adds "*if you leave them alone*" (the Sun god's cattle and his hearty flocks of sheep) you will be able to get to Ithaca but "*if you steal them*" you'll lose your ship and your companions and "if you survive", "late and with much trouble you will get home". These are direct warnings given personally to Ulysses and not just to his companions.

This is how we can see that the problem of greed has to do with Ulysses and not just with his companions. He is the one who must "*control his heart*"; but control what? It seems clear that he must control his own greed that is the first cause, not hunger, that pushes him to throw himself onto goods that are not his own.

But what does Ulysses do? It's true that he first begs them to not land on the sun god's island and that they did not want to listen to him, but he was the boss and he should have made them obey him. It is not enough that he asks them to make a solemn oath to not touch the cattle.

Alright, now everyone make a solemn oath,

*that if we find a herd of cattle or a large flock of sheep
no one, acting madly,
will kill either a cow or a sheep, but peacefully
you will eat the food that Circe the immortal gave us”.
That’s what I said and all of them immediately took the oath.
And as soon as they had sworn and said their oath,
we anchored our well-made ship in the deep port ...(Od. XII, 299-305)*

Now, while he had already decided to distance himself, he only gives them a weak warning about what kind of troubles they will run into if they dare touch the animals:

*“My dear ones, there is food and drink in our rapid ship
there is plenty; so let’s not touch the cattle, otherwise something will
happen to us...
(Od. XII, 320-321)
... That is what I said and their arrogant hearts were persuaded. (Od. XII, 324)*

And then he goes for a tour around the island with the excuse he is going to pray to the gods.

*After that I wanted to go deeper into the island to pray
to the gods, so they would show me the way to get home.
And since I had freed myself of my companions, by going around the island,
after I washed my hands in a place that was out of the wind,
I prayed to all the gods that inhabit Olympus:
and they filled my eyes with sweet sleep. (Od. XII, 333-338)*

In answer to his prayers the gods fill his eyes with sleep. Is this a joke, or is it one of Ulysses’ usual inventions so he can avoid owning his responsibility in things?

When his companions opened the ox-skin containing the winds he also said that he had fallen into a deep sleep.

What is the truth here?

The truth is that Teireisias had asked him to “*control his heart*” and he had warned him that if he had taken the cattle everyone would have died.

If Ulysses does not listen to him, he is the only one responsible and it is his greed that makes him act in this manner. If his companions banquet on the cattle’s flesh for six consecutive days, what does he do in the meantime, stay off to one side? Or does he participate in the banquet?

The truth is complex and it is not always linear.

While we earlier looked at how Ulysses suffers from envy, now we can affirm that he suffers from “envy of goods” just as much as his companions do. He is the one who could not control his heart and he dragged his companions to their ruin.

We could argue that Zeus doesn’t kill Ulysses but he does kill his companions.

This is true, but Zeus does punish him severely by first destroying his ship and then by pushing him backwards towards the vortex of Charybdis. In this manner Ulysses has all the time in the world to reflect on the damage that greed produces, his own greed as well as that of others.

Greed, the historians say, was Alexander the Great's main illness. No conquest could placate his hunger for more conquests. Just as soon as he was successful in one, he immediately had to organize another one. When he finally stopped, after having conquered half of Asia, he did so not because he decided to but because his soldiers, exhausted after a thousand wars, refused to keep on fighting.

CHAPTER XXIX

MORE ABOUT ENVY

From the second book “*La nascita della cosmo-art*” {The Birth of Cosmo-Art} I will reprint the following article on greed, written for a Group Laboratory of Existential Anthropology of the Sophia University of Rome:

“Greed is one of the basic contradictions within human beings. It is made up of the presence of two opposites: *the abhorrence of emptiness and the inability to tolerate fullness*.

Those who are greedy are terrified of emptiness and they must always chase after a way to defend themselves from it. On the other hand, those who are greedy cannot tolerate *fullness*, because if they were full they could no longer complain about being empty and complaining is the most usual way of illuding oneself that the emptiness has been filled.

Complaining is also indispensable for those who have decided to cultivate sadomasochistic pleasure. Sadomasochistic pleasure is the result of an unhealthy vision of life or of a desire for revenge. Revenge always carries with it great pleasure at having one’s pride wounded, but it is a type of pleasure that becomes a self-punishing expiation. The first type of pleasure is sadistic, the second type is masochistic.

The desire for revenge can rise up in response to a wound to one’s narcissism caused by trauma. It can also rise up, very simply, in response to an enormous arrogant demand on the part of a megalomaniac *I*. The demand to be considered the center of the universe, to whom everyone must bow down to, offering adoration and respect, often encounters those who are not willing to be dominated like this. Thus the *I* inevitably is offended by such disobedience and so it decides to get revenge against anyone who does not give in to its arrogant demands.

These arrogant demands thus generate a wound that is intolerable to the *I*’s pride. Such a wound to one’s pride must not be confused with the wound inflicted to one’s narcissism as a result of trauma, even though often in current language this distinction is not at all taken into consideration.

A *narcissistic wound* of traumatic origin is often the consequence of a trauma to the *fetal I*, or the *infant I* being deprived of a *fullness* that they should have experienced during the prenatal phase and the oral phase but did not. The narcissistic wound is not only the result of a deprivation; it is also the result of the fact that the *I* believes it has been done a grave injustice that has damaged its biological, psychological and existential needs. It is the feeling of such injustice that creates a need for revenge, rather than a need for a healthy way to heal the wound.

The anger that is unleashed within the *I* is so immense that the only possible way for it to feel it has been repaid is by demanding the destruction of its aggressor, rather than by satisfying the need that was left unsatisfied.

But since it is often neither convenient nor possible to destroy the aggressor, an aggressive strategy and a self-punishing strategy are automatically put into place; the combination of the two strategies make up the basis of the choice of sadomasochistic pleasure. The healthy pleasure represented by finding a way to have the need satisfied is rejected, and the unhealthy pleasure of keeping satisfaction of the need at bay takes precedence, which then expresses itself through complaining, revenge and expiation.

The narcissistic wound becomes even more dangerous when *pride* and *megalomania*, that are always naturally present in an individual, are added on to the wound. The greater the *arrogant demands*, the greater the wound.

Arrogant demands are a result of *theomania* and of a concept of justice that has lost touch with historical reality. They feed on an idealistic reality or on a reality based on fantasy.

We all have the right to breathe air that is not polluted and we all had the right to live for nine months in a uterus that was not polluted, but reality could care less about our rights and we have the tendency to rebel against reality instead of accepting it, even when we must accept it so we can transform it.

Arrogant demands and wounds can be present in an individual during prenatal life and from there they can spread throughout the rest of one's life. At this point the very concept of reality becomes distorted. The parameters that the *fetal I* uses to judge and perceive the quality of reality most certainly are not anything like the parameters used by an *adult I* which is fully inserted in extra-uterine reality.

The sense of reality of *adult I* depends on how it perceives the environmental circumstances it must adapt to if it wants to survive. It also depends on its perception of the potential that the *I* has to transform and improve the surrounding reality. This is the meaning of external reality. Then there is the sense of internal reality, that can be ill; it can be *full of meaning* or it can be without any meaning at all. During intrauterine experience only the *I* exists; Others don't exist at all. Only the needs of the *I* exist and the needs of others don't exist. Not even the needs of the mother exist, who is the first Other that the *fetal I* can perceive as an existence separate from its own.

The narcissistic wound that strikes the *I* during the embryonic stage or in the fetal stage is so powerful that it can keep the *I* from being *completely born*, even when its intrauterine life ends and its extra-uterine life begins. The *I* remains bound to the stage it was wounded in and the only thing that exists for it are its wounds and the reality connected to those wounds. Any other reality that is different from that one either is not perceived at all or, if it is perceived, it is cancelled out and destroyed.

It is as though the *I* continues to live inside the uterus and not outside of it. It's as though the *I* were never born at all. The *biological I*, the *corporeal I* and the

psychological I are all born but the *I Person* is not completely born. It remains wrapped in the placenta and the placenta begins to poison it, instead of nurturing it.

In these conditions the *I* is always searching for what it did not have, but when it finds it, it must reject and devalue it. Nothing will ever be able to offer that initial stage of fullness that was so yearned for and that was not experienced because it simply was not there. This conflict between searching and rejecting makes up the basis of modern man's greed: mankind today has never left the womb, it has never been completely born.

As Martin Buber says, a person whose *I* is empty was missing a *You* from the time of conception onward. A person is greedy for *recognition* because it was not recognized as a *You* by the *I* that generated him or her. Success, power and glory are the illusions that the *I* believes can satisfy its need to be recognized as a *You*. But the more success they achieve, the emptier they feel, so they try to fill themselves with more success and more recognition, until the day comes when this lie is unmasked in an unexpected and tragic manner.

This can help us understand the case of Maradona and of many others that our newspapers continuously publish stories about. We can thus understand the many dramas within couple relationships, where one partner never feels like they are recognized by the other and vice-versa. The same thing is true for social interactions and relationships in general. When the narcissistic wound caused by trauma and arrogant demands unite, as so often happens these days, greed, destructive envy and the need for revenge reach extremely high levels that are hard to control.

If instead the *I* is full of the fullness of being, that it has a right to experience at every phase of its life, then it is capable of feeling joy. Since it is rare today to find anyone who can feel joy and live in serenity, we must deduct from this that very few have accomplished the fullness they need. We can also assume that very few do something about achieving this fullness, that can only be obtained after working for it. It is not a given.

A greedy person cannot tolerate joy, because if they were to accept it they would have to give up their greedy demands and their complaints. They would have to give up their sadomasochistic pleasure and the pleasure of revenge. Giving these things up would mean having to experience emptiness and very few are willing to experience this. The greedy person, when offered a choice between joy and unhealthy pleasure, will always choose the unhealthy pleasure, because they cannot face emptiness. Joy requires hard work while unhealthy pleasure is always available; it requires no effort.

It is indeed a PARADOX that during adult life fullness can be obtained only by accepting emptiness and experiencing it completely. As long as one is horrified by emptiness, this horror fills the emptiness and there is no room for any other type of fullness. Remaining horrified by fullness and complaining about emptiness do not allow for fullness".

(Reprinted from "*La nascita della cosmo-art*" { The Birth of Cosmo-Art}, pgs. 19-21)

CHAPTER XXX

GREED AND ENVY

“Greed is the principal matrix that nurtures envy towards others. Others are seen as the sole owners of the fullness that they have and that we don’t have. Others, whom we assume have that fullness, make the presence of the emptiness within ourselves acutely painful. Thus the other must be destroyed, in the illusory hope that such destruction will somehow relieve the painful presence of emptiness. I have spoken more extensively on envy in the article on the film *“The Bodyguard”*.

Those who are greedy reason in these terms: *the others have everything, I have nothing, thus they all must die*. Those who are greedy never cease to compare themselves to others and to affirm with rancor that the others are better off than they are because those others have something that they do not have. It is always easy to see what others have and what we don’t have. But the real problem is not in the things themselves. How can one discover how those who live in fullness have managed to reach this fullness, and free themselves of emptiness?

To experience emptiness means going into the desert and crossing it from one end to the other. In the desert we are alone and we cannot compare ourselves to anyone else. We can compare ourselves only to ourselves, and look back at the road already travelled and forward at what still lies ahead. The desert is a metaphor and not a physical place. Life can be the desert we must cross so we can reach our goal, or it can be a desert where we end up dying after we have been seduced by the attraction to death. This is, essentially, an attraction to emptiness, where one chooses nothingness instead of choosing being.

Those who are greedy are never happy with who they are nor with what they have. They are never happy with themselves. They are always outside of themselves; they are always somewhere else and never are they completely present in any place. Their favorite place is the rational mind, where they dwell on negative thoughts that express their discontent, their dissatisfaction, their anger and criticism towards themselves, towards others and towards life. The rational mind is based on will power and will power is based on theomania, or on the arrogant demand to be an Absolute and not a human being who was born to look for Truth and Beauty; Truth and Beauty that are the result of a creative power we must activate and not simple objects to be bought or stolen”.

GREED, THIRST FOR POWER AND DESTRUCTIVE ENVY

“One of humanity’s most longed for goals has always been the attainment of power. The unconfessed aspiration of every human being is to have power over others and to have no one above oneself, who we would have to be accountable to with regards to our actions and choices.

When greed and the thirst for power are coupled together it is very rare to see someone who is satisfied of the power that life has given them or of the power that they themselves have conquered. The power they have is never enough. They always want more and every means to get it becomes legitimate and can be rationalized ad infinitum. Stealing, conspiracy, homicide, deceit: everything is allowed. Responsibility, loyalty, gratitude all become words that are deprived of any meaning.

Anyone who has more power than me is always a tyrant who must be overthrown or an enemy who must be fought against.

Greed and power generate destructive envy. Destructive envy incubates in the depths of the human soul for a long time and, as soon as circumstances permit, it breaks forth with all its devastation into the life of individuals and the life of whole countries . What I am describing is history and history cannot be changed with a few or even with many sessions of therapy, no matter what kind of therapy it might be.

What can change history is the decision to step out of the *existential lie* and the choice to conform one's actions to the laws of life, at any cost. I have always based my hope for my dream to change history on the ability to create a new way of thinking, being and acting, based on the laws of life. Such type of new orientation must be sought after assiduously and constantly and must be respected by making a deep commitment to it.

I know very well that all this generates fear and that some, instead of facing this fear and overcoming it, will go around it, if they can, through lying and opportunism”.

THE FULLNESS OF BEING

“The fullness of being is a fullness that is always new and different. It condenses into a second of the present, when that second is embraced with all of its consequences, good or bad that they might be.

The present is always alternating between emptiness that becomes full and fullness that becomes empty so it can fill up once again.

Fullness of being is experienced every time the interior dimension changes in regards to oneself, to others, to life. Every change is a death and rebirth and while one is experiencing death it is clear that one cannot experience rebirth: this comes right afterward.

Fullness of being is a continual newness of being. This is why it cannot be accomplished once and for all. Nor can it be accumulated all at once. It appears rhythmically, like day and night, and it keeps on growing forever.

There can be no experience of fullness of being for someone who has not yet decided to leave the uterus and be completely born into reality”.

(see A.M. “*La nascita della cosmo-art*” {The Birth of Cosmo-Art} , pgs. 19-23).

I will again turn to the help that visual images offer and reprint what I wrote from my book mentioned earlier on the film by Werner Herzog about the emperor Bokassa.

“Echoes from a Sombre Empire”

a documentary film by Werner Herzog on Bokassa
the ex-Emperor of Central Africa

Main interpretation

Living life as thieves is the opposite of living life as a gift
and this way of living has always been present throughout human history.
Among its modern perpetrators are those
who do not want to grow up
they do not want to become adults
because they stay fixated at the oral phase
that they had experienced negatively.
Because while it's true that they were nurtured by their mothers
they were nurtured so they could be devoured
and now they must seek revenge,
devouring and destroying
everything that comes near
their hungry mouths.
To eat and be eaten
to devour and be devoured
to be bored and to bore others
is the imperative emperor
of modern man
who steals and is stolen from.

During the oral phase, and in my opinion already during prenatal life, the oral *I* is an elephant-sized mouth that gapes at the center of first the maternal universe and then of the entire universe.

The elephant-sized and megalomaniac *I* is always hungry. The more it swells up the hungrier it gets.

It's hungry for food, for power, for recognition, for success.

Bokassa first becomes a general, then a marshal, then an emperor, with a huge crown on his head that is decorated with diamonds and has a tail many meters long. Don't monkeys have tails? Well, Bokassa is the monkey who imitates Napoleon; he is the monkey who imitates the Pharaohs.

Dignitaries and ambassadors from every nation come to his coronation to pay their sombre respects. But during the ceremony a chubby, frightened little boy is also present; stuffed into a white uniform, as though he were the heir of the empire, he moves like an automaton and can't stop yawning. Herzog's unforgiving eye moves from focusing first on the Emperor, and then on the child.

Which of the two is the Emperor?

Bokassa, the child who was devoured, or Bokassa, the child who devours?

Bokassa goes to visit the Pope, the kings and heads of state all over the world and they all receive him with due honor. Everyone honors themselves by honoring Bokassa. This is what the reasoning of the nations requires. This is what the madness of the West requires.

His majesty the oral *I* is always hungry for honors and recognition; it is always ready to destroy and plunder. Because he was not nourished enough; because he was not nourished with milk and honey; because the mother did not nourish him, she simply devoured him.

And now he devours the mother, devours his country's wealth, just like we devour the wealth of our planet. He devours his people's freedom, he devours his people's flesh, like a cannibal. And he devours his wives, both black and white, one after another, tirelessly and with a hungry mouth that produces 54 children.

Finally his people rebel and Bokassa is deposed and condemned to death.

France, that has a weakness for grandiosity, helps him escape and gives him a castle to live in. He, however, gets bored in his castle and he returns home, where a death sentence is hanging over his head.

How strange, though: they capture him but they don't kill him. He declares his innocence and wants another trial; he obtains one and they condemn him to life imprisonment.

In prison, not being able to devour human flesh, he devours the pages of the Bible and declares himself an Apostle of Christ. But this is not so strange: he most surely meditated at length on Christ's words that say: "Unless you eat of my flesh and drink of my blood, you cannot have life". That translated into modern language means; unless you allow yourselves to be devoured and you devour in return you cannot have life.

Bokassa first copied Napoleon and now he starts copying Jesus Christ.

This is how the delirium of the oral megalomaniac *I* goes on and on; this delirium belongs to all of us and not just to him.

Living life as thieves is something that begins during the first relationship between mother and child.

We are now living in a historical moment in which mothers nourish their children so they can devour them.

Children who are devoured by their mothers become themselves devouring and greed spreads everywhere. Does anyone know how to cure greed?

A child can be devoured in a thousand ways with a thousand different modalities. The most frequent of these is possessiveness and abandonment. But the

one that dominates every other is sadomasochism. The mother is first sadistic and devours, then she becomes masochistic and allows herself to be devoured. First the child is masochistic and allows itself to be devoured, then it becomes sadistic and devours. If it cannot devour it gets revenge anyway by becoming destructive.

In this oral, consumer society, is there anyone who was not once devoured and does not devour today?

I know that my mother devoured my life and that I was a prisoner of vengeful hatred towards her and towards myself. Then, once I discovered the importance of having a healthy love for myself, I changed my decision and I adopted new strategies. These strategies were sometimes very difficult and painful but they helped me get out of the infernal circle of devouring relationships and the need for revenge.

I have had more than one devouring mother. With immense pain, day after day, I undertook the enormous effort to detach myself from them, first physically and existentially and then internally, by pulling them off of the most hidden folds of my being.

Many times I manifested outside myself these devouring mothers, in situations that I created with my own two hands or that my *SELF* created for me. It was a hard journey, to learn to respect myself and to have others respect me, to create boundaries and impose limits. But it was even more difficult to learn how to go through the subtleties of masochistic pleasure, to dig them out, eliminate them and substitute them with healthy pleasure and a healthy relationship based on respect, on recognition of it as a gift and on reciprocity.

If we don't get out of devouring enmeshment we cannot reach the shores of the freedom of the Person, who is capable of loving him or herself and others, and to the freedom of the Artist, who is capable of creating beauty for his or her own joy and for the joy of others.

Every day I try to learn about the passage from living life as a thief to living life as a gift, and, even before that, how to step away from greed so I can express reciprocity.

I am speaking of myself so I can speak to you about you, with the hopes that someone will see themselves in me, not only because of what you have suffered but because of what you have chosen to do to leave behind your identity as one who was devoured and one who devours”.

(see A.M. “*La nascita della cosmo-art*” {The Birth of Cosmo-Art} pgs. 25-27).

CHAPTER XXXI

GREED AS THE CAUSE OF HUMANITY'S SUFFERING

I was once convinced that the problems described previously had to do only with modern times, but as I read and re-read the *Odyssey*, I realized that there really is no substantial difference between modern times and the times in which the poem the *Odyssey* was written.

Two-thousand six hundred years have gone by, and maybe even more, but what Homer wrote could easily be written today.

This does not surprise me much, because the evolution of the universe takes place over billions of years and the evolution of humanity takes place over millions of years. In this perspective, 2,600 years are perhaps even less than two minutes and six seconds.

This is why I believe that the *Odyssey* is a book of wisdom that can serve to guide our lives today just as it did to guide people's lives in the past.

Regarding greed, Homer takes a look at it when he tells us about Aegisthus, right at the beginning of the poem:

*"Ah, how much blame mortals put on the gods!
They say their suffering comes from us, but instead
it's because of their mad crimes against duty that they suffer (Od. I, 32-34).*

*And so now Aegisthus has taken against duty his woman
the legitimate wife of Atreus' son and killed him on his return,
knowing of the abyss of death. Because we warned him,
by sending sharp-eyed Hermes, not to kill him, not to covet the woman:
because Orestes of Atreus' house would get revenge
when, once grown, he would miss his homeland.
Hermes told him this, but he could not persuade Aegisthus' heart
with his wise council; now he has paid for everything!" (Od. I, 35-43)*

Aegisthus does not listen to Zeus' wise advice, so Orestes will end up killing him. Aegisthus is overtaken by his greed for power and he wants to usurp Agamemnon's place as king. He therefore first seduces Clytemnestra and then they end up killing Agamemnon and together they rule over Mycene until Orestes kills them both.

Here Homer clearly says that evil comes to humans not because the gods are mean but because humans "act against duty".

*it is because of their mad crimes against duty that they suffer.
(Od. I, 34)*

As far as the greed of Ulysses' companions is concerned, Homer mentions it at the beginning of the poem.

*(Ulysses) suffered much pain in his heart while at sea,
fighting for his life and for his men's return home.
But he could not save them, even though he wanted to,
they were lost because of their own madness, foolish ones!,
who ate the sun god's cattle,
and the Sun destroyed the day of their return (Od. I, 4-9).*

As far as Ulysses' greed goes, Homer speaks of it in the way I described previously.

And at the very beginning of the poem the greed of the Suitors is spoken of at length, when Athena reaches Ulysses' palace so she can speak with Telemachus.

This is an obvious sign that this is a theme that is very important to Homer and to the development of the entire poem.

I would like to mention here that just as the Suitors have taken up residence in Ulysses' house, what has taken over their home in external reality also lives within Ulysses and Penelope as well.

Of the various principles that I have formulated, one of my favorite's states: "*outer reality corresponds to inner reality*". It is never by chance when we find that what is invisible in our inner world is reproduced outside ourselves.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE PAIN OF OUR TRIALS

In verse 4 of book I Homer speaks of the great suffering that Ulysses goes through while at sea. In verse 34 he speaks of the suffering that is caused by the insane crimes committed by humans, like the one committed by Aegisthus when he killed Agamemnon, and like the one committed by Ulysses' companions when, as a result of their madness, they ate the cattle sacred to the Sun.

In the introduction Homer also states that Ulysses suffers because of the “*trials*” that he has to undergo.

Suffering because of trials does not mean that Ulysses must undergo trials to see whether or not he can overcome them. It means, rather, that Ulysses was chosen to reach a goal and this goal requires accepting a lot of pain.

*(Ulysses) not even in Ithaca would I have escaped these **trials** (Od. I, 18)*

And later Ulysses speaks to Penelope of other trials:

*And meanwhile careful Odysseus spoke with his woman:
“Oh woman, we are not yet at the end of all our **trials**,
unfathomable effort still lies before me,
long, bitter, that I must go through all the way.
This is what Teireisias' spirit predicted for me
the day I descended into the house of Hades (Od. XXIII, 247-252)*

Here it is important to take note of the two different things that cause pain.

One is the crimes human beings commit. The other is the trials human beings must face if they want to create beauty that makes them immortal and that renders the living organism that is this universe, which human beings are a part of, immortal.

Ulysses and Penelope are not guilty of any crimes, thus it is due to another reason that pain is so much a part of their lives.

The purpose of pain is creativity, as is written in the Manifest of Cosmo-Art.

Its purpose is to create *secondary beauty*

On one hand Zeus and on the other Poseidon fill Ulysses with much pain; “**I want to push him yet again so he is filled with pain**” says Poseidon (Od. V, 290), when he sees that Ulysses is about to reach the island of the Phaeacians and he stirs up a violent storm against him.

I will again quote the verses in which Homer, in Book V, insists repeatedly on describing the pain and mortal anguish that overtakes Ulysses, because I want to make sure that my readers do not forget about it, as do many of the writers who speak of Ulysses and mention only his deceit and his manipulation.

300 *I am afraid that the goddess told me the truth,
 when she said that before I reached my homeland,
 I would have experienced the most painful of times at sea...*

305 *... now (here) the abyss of death is a sure thing for me.*

Oh! If only I had died beneath the walls of Troy...
312 *... Instead my destiny was to be the victim of a miserable death.*

*While he spoke thus, a towering wave broke over him,
 With terrible force, and turned the raft around.*
315 *Far away from the raft he was thrown and he let go
 of the tiller: the mast at the middle broke
 under the horrendous gust of fighting winds,
 and the sail and boom were thrown far into the sea*

*... He was under water a long time, he was unable
320 to come back to the surface, assaulted by the great wave.*

*... He finally came up and spit out the salty, bitter water from his
 mouth, that coursed also down around his head.*

*... At this point the nymph Ino saw him and felt pity for Ulysses...
 who was drifting, consumed with anguish... and she said to him:*

*".... Here, place this veil beneath your breast,
 it's immortal: you won't have to be afraid of pain or death any
 longer".*

This is precious help but the storm still does not cease...

*... For two days and two nights; and in the swollen waves he
 drifted about, and often in his heart he saw death before him.*

And when Ulysses finally saw land he was taken over by fear

420 *... that some god would send some huge monster against me
 from the abyss.*

*He won't have to fight the sea monster anymore but his suffering
 has not ended at all:
 ... There were no safe ports for ships, no bays,*

there were only sharp crags and rocks and cliffs.

410 *... "Woe is me, Zeus has let me glimpse the land I'd lost all hope for
after coming all the way through this abyss
but I see no way out of the frothy sea
only sharp rocks protrude with waves all around
that scream and roar and only one naked stone wall rises up out of
them;*

425 *... and here came a huge wave that carried him against the harsh
coastline; where his skin would have been torn and his bones
smashed, had blue-eyed Athena not whispered in his heart:
and leaping he grabbed the rock with two hands,
and he clung to it moaning, until the enormous wave receded.*

*After having been smashed against the rocks several times,
Ulysses finally saw the mouth of a river and thus he prayed:*

445 *"Hear me, Sire, whomever you may be: I believe you must be often
called upon, by those escaping Poseidon's wrath by leaving the sea.
It is by venerating the immortal gods
That a lost man just like me now arrives before your river,
at your knees I come, after so much suffering.
Have pity on me, sovereign: I am hereby your servant".*

455 *The river heard his prayer and Ulysses found a landing.
...His whole body was swollen, much saltwater poured
from his mouth and nose: without breath or voice
he lay exhausted, prostrated by a terrible tiredness.*

Why so much pain?

Here the purpose of his pain is not to expiate, it is necessary to create a new Ulysses. Its purpose is to transform Ulysses from being a warrior who fights and risks his life to conquer ephemeral beauty (Helena, Menelaus' adulterous wife) into becoming an artist who is able to create *secondary beauty* for himself and for the whole universe.

Pain serves to create a new type of beauty that did not exist before (for example, the type that appears in the form of Nausicaa after Ulysses manages to land on the island of the Phaeacians). Nausicaa is an external apparition of the type of beauty that Ulysses has managed to create within himself after he has battled for three whole days against his hybris and against his repressed hatred. This happened while he was being smashed against the stormy waves and against the ragged cliffs, and Athena offered him wise advice.

Pain helps Ulysses transform his arrogant heart into a *humble heart*, as happens when Ulysses bows down before the Phaeacian queen Arete and asks her to help him.

Pain is necessary to create the “*glorious concordance*” (Ulysses and Penelope that become one soul) and this is a true alchemical transformation.

Pain is necessary to create an immortal soul, a new type of life that can forever fly from one universe to the next.

Pain is necessary so the universe can obtain an immortal soul that will keep it alive forever, even when its space-time structure is dissolved, like the human body dissolves after its death. Stars dissolve as well but while they are alive they create light that does not dissolve when they die.

Pain helps human beings become capable of incarnating into a new form of life. This life-form is no longer physical, it is made up of an immortal life that no longer depends on the space-time of this universe.

Unfortunately, we are not aware of the fact that pain is a cosmic force that moves the world. No one taught us this and human beings, who are reactive by nature and who want to remain so for their whole life, know nothing about the cosmic potential contained in pain. They do not know that great art comes from pain and not only from talent and inspiration.

The universe is the result of the pain of a great explosion that physicists call the “Big Bang”, but for physicists, who do not know that the universe is a living organism, pain pertains only to those beings that have biological life and not to the whole universe itself.

Experience teaches us that pain is like a huge explosion, that first blows us apart and then, if we follow our inner wisdom, is transformed into a great work of art. This does not happen because of magic. It happens when we obtain the great ability to give a creative meaning to Life that can transform catastrophes into forms of life that are superior to those that existed before.

It is normal to be afraid of pain and to want to run away from it.

A coward is not someone who is afraid of pain, it is someone who does not know how to grasp the opportunities for growth that pain contains.

Homer speaks openly of Ulysses’ fear when, during the storm, the nymph Ino asks Ulysses to abandon the raft and jump into the sea, and he resists and does not want to do it because he is afraid of losing the only security left to him.

It is mentioned again during the massacre of the Suitors when Ulysses sees that the traitor Melanthe is giving the Suitors weapons.

*Then Odysseus' heart and knees melted,
when he saw them taking up weapons and grasping
long poles in their hands: the feat seemed too great for him.
(Od. XXII, 147-149)*

If instead human beings can listen to the wisdom that comes from their *Personal SELF* and the *Cosmic SELF* (Athena and Zeus), pain is part of our lives not because we must expiate, it actually helps us to create something new.

Ulysses, the man “of the many woes” as Homer describes him, is able to grasp this wisdom and create immortal beauty for himself and the entire universe. It's up to us whether we want to imitate him or not.

The *Cosmic SELF* is not immortal, but if Ulysses accepts to make a fusion between human and cosmic forces, then the *Cosmic SELF* becomes immortal and so does he.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE ISLAND OF THE PHAEACIANS

Alcinous, Demodocus and Ulysses.

While Demodocus sings about the destruction of Troy, Ulysses is crying softly to himself and Alcinous becomes aware of it.

When Alcinous asks Ulysses why he is crying, Ulysses answers: **because the celestial gods have given me much anguish.**

But yet I also wonder: why is Ulysses crying? And why does he start crying just when they start narrating his glorious actions?

The answer that Ulysses offers, even though it's correct in the sense that it refers to his great suffering during his return to Ithaca, it is inappropriate at the time Demodocus is telling his story.

So why does Ulysses start crying specifically in that moment and then does not cry when instead he tells about everything he had to go through?

I don't believe it is something that Homer overlooked. To the contrary, I believe that Homer is hoping that his readers will be very attentive and they will be able to understand what he is trying to say between the lines. And even if they don't understand right away, they will at least be able to ask themselves what is happening and begin looking for a correct answer.

The answer that came to me is that Homer, besides talking about Ulysses' cunning, speaks also about his own cunning as a poet.

He wants to underline more than just that Ulysses is the man of the many woes. He wants the reader to understand, or at least to wonder about, the profound meaning of these woes that animates the deeper theme found in his poem.

Homer does not want Ulysses to be honored mostly for his cunning, he wants him to be honored for his ability to accept the pain that the celestial gods rain down on him and on his ability to give this pain a very special meaning. This meaning is what Zeus and Athena reveal to him during his voyage. Ulysses, being the attentive listener to Zeus' advice that he is, becomes capable of grasping this meaning and of incorporating it into his own awareness.

The "*Manifesto della Cosmo-Art*" {Manifest of Cosmo-Art} states that pain's purpose is to create and not to expiate. It helps create the passage from an unfinished identity to an identity that is continuously more evolved: from an animal, reactive identity, to an artistic identity, that is capable of creating immortal beauty.

Two things surprise me while Ulysses is with Alcinous: the first is that Ulysses' tears express the refusal of his *I* to accept this pain, so he cries and complains.

The second is that, after this first moment, Ulysses takes the limelight from Demodocus and starts narrating in full detail all of his adventures and all his dramas, to the point where the king, queen and all the Phaeacian princes are rooted to their seats and would never want to stop listening to him.

Ulysses' story is created by his pain, Homer's poem is created by his pain. From the pain sent down by the gods the beauty of a work of art is created; one work is poetry and the other is that special type of beauty that Ulysses will know how to create with Penelope, *concordance* between husband and wife. He wishes this *concordance* for Nausicaa as well, when she finds him soon after he washes up on shore after being shipwrecked.

*.... "may the gods bring you all the gifts your heart so desires
a husband and a home may they bring you along with the glorious
concordance
along with them; nothing is more beautiful and more precious than this
when with a single soul man and woman run their household;
the malicious are rendered furious
but their friends rejoice and they become well renowned" (Od. VI, 180-185)*

Without pain no true poetry can be created, without pain we could not have the story of Ulysses' adventures and we would not have one of the key elements that must be reflected upon if we want to understand the Odyssey's deeper meaning.

For Buddha pain comes from desire and illusion. If we extinguish desire, pain will disappear.

For the Bible, pain is the consequence of the wrong committed in Eden and , even when the Messiah will come there will be salvation from guilt but not from pain, which will continue to exist. Expiation will not end until the arrival of the Apocalypse, and pain is necessary to expiate.

For Homer, pain is a cosmic force that serves to create a special type of beauty, the beauty that every human being dreams about and that is called immortality.

The Greeks believed that only the gods could make humans immortal. We know that Circe and Calypso promise Ulysses immortality if only he will marry them.

Ulysses refuses to do so. Ulysses thinks that this is not the right way to reach immortality, and that beyond the beauty of the gods lies a superior type of beauty that humans can achieve only by fusing pain, wisdom and art. The secret of true immortality is found within this type of beauty.

Ulysses thinks that the gods cannot make humans immortal because in reality they are not themselves immortal, despite what the Greeks think and believe during his time.

Ulysses does not discover this truth right away, right after leaving Troy. His long wandering and his great suffering will allow him to put this truth together piece by piece, a truth that no other Greek hero has learned.

In all of Greek mythology, which is very vast, there is no other personage that reasons like he does.

Hercules obtains immortality with his twelve labors and he earns the right to stay up on Olympus with the celestial gods and goddesses.

Even so, Homer shows us Hercules as another shadow among the shadows that wander around in Hades.

The Greeks thought that military glory was a way to obtain immortality and they are not the only ones to think this. But Homer shows us Achilles in Hades, who is despairing because he is no longer alive. He also has him say that he would gladly exchange his glory for the life of any slave.

Why doesn't Ulysses choose to marry Circe or even Calypso?

Why is his soul so set on returning to Ithaca, where Penelope awaits him?

Many say it has to do with his homesickness. This is a very disappointing answer, that does not really find any confirmation in the facts of the story. Many Greeks emigrated to America and it does not seem to me that they all hope to leave America to return to Greece.

The reason is because they are not really goddesses, they're only mortal women, and their divinity is only a creation of the human mind.

Does the light that leaves the stars and travels through the infinite spaces in the universe travel just so it can return home?

I don't think so.

And yet if light comes from a star, that star is its home.

Light does not feel nostalgia for its home and the star it was born from is not really its home.

What is its home, then?

Astrophysicists don't really know. Nor do they know what the final destination of light is, that travels without ever stopping. Light is made up of photons. Photons are found inside of atoms. We are made up of atoms and our atoms contain many photons. Is it correct to say that we contain a lot of light?

What is the home of human beings?

What is our true return?

Human beings are not simply emigrants, says Homer.

Humans are creators and we travel to create beauty that does not yet exist.

Human beings suffer to create and it is not always clear what the final creation will be, what the final purpose for so much suffering will be.

The silk worm weaves its web and thinks that it is creating it because the end goal is the creation of the cocoon it must go into so it can become a chrysalis and then a butterfly.

What does the silk worm know about the type of beauty that human beings will create out of its silk?

Shall we think like the worm does?

Wouldn't that be perfectly stupid?

There are some coincidences in the story that Ulysses tells Alcinous and in the story that Homer tells us about the Phaeacians, and I would like to see whether they happen just by chance or if they instead hold some important truth.

The first story tells about Ulysses, who, as soon as he leaves Troy loaded with booty worthy of royalty, goes ashore on the land of the Cicones. He sacks them as though he were not at all satisfied by the booty he conquered in Troy, and he is greedily looking for more.

The Cicones, though, soon strengthen their ranks and Ulysses must escape as soon as possible with his ships.

In chapter XII of my book *The Ulysseans*, I described my hypothesis that the Trojan war is about the battle that sperm must fight to penetrate the ovum and fecundate it, and that the *Odyssey* tells the story of the embryo's development within the amniotic liquid. If this hypothesis is valid, then Ulysses' arrival at the land of the Cicones would be the first landing of the fecundated ovum in the uterus. This ovum is also a voracious predator that attacks the mother's uterus in search of food.

The second landing is at the land of the lotus eaters and here we encounter the ovum's voracity, on one hand, and its laziness on the other. The ovum is not always willing to make much of an effort to grow and to give life to a human organism which will be complete in all its parts and all its complexity.

I believe that many ova wonder whether or not it is better to stay in a state of false inebriation and renounce life and all its difficulties. This would explain the great number of so-called spontaneous abortions (miscarriages).

Ulysses instead reacts energetically and grabs his drugged companions and gets back on the ship to continue his voyage.

What does he end up finding? Another way he could end his life that is even worse than the first one.

He winds up finding Polyphemus, the most violent of all the Cyclops. He is a gigantic monster with one eye who loves sheep and rams but hates men, whom he eats two at a time.

We soon learn that Polyphemus is the son of Poseidon, the god of the sea.

We also learn from Homer that the Phaeacians are also children of Poseidon. But just as Polyphemus is a monstrous barbarian, the Phaeacians have created an evolved, pacific, harmonious civilization that loves games, song and dance.

The Cyclops wants to devour Ulysses and his companions, the Phaeacians want to save Ulysses, fill him with gifts and take him back to Ithaca on their fastest ship. It does not matter to them if doing so will bring out Poseidon's rage, as does end up happening. With Zeus' permission, the sea god first transforms the ship that has returned to port into a huge rock and then covers the whole city with a mountain.

The golden world of the Phaeacians disappears, Nausicaa so full of grace and beauty disappears, Arete, who is a giving mother and not a devouring, phallic one, disappears. And what will have happened to Alcinous, who is a magnanimous, courteous king, sensitive to others, always careful to be "balanced" in all his actions and all his emotions?

How can we understand why the Phaeacians make a decision that is so destructive for themselves just so they can help Ulysses?

If we look at Melanie Klein's work, who extensively studied the oral phase, we can understand some important things about the relationship that is established between mother and child.

Through her clinical research, this author came to the conclusion that a child divides its mother in two within its fantasy: one half is represented by the good breast and the other represents the bad breast. The bad breast is bad because it does not want to give the child everything it needs and the child makes it the first object of its envy, its hatred and its destructiveness.

This splitting the mother between good and bad can either mend itself at a certain point in the growth process or it can go on forever, if it is supported by other life circumstances.

We could thus hypothesize that Ulysses, in his wanderings about the sea, continuously encounters the negative mother object. The first of these encounters happens with Polyphemus, who is Poseidon's son. When he then arrives at the island of the Phaeacians, who are also Poseidon's children, he encounters the positive mother object.

Ulysses cannot lose the treasures given him by the Phaeacian king and princes, because they represent all the positive maternal attributes he has introjected within himself.

When this splitting is overcome, there will no longer be monsters that must be faced. In the same measure, the positive mother object will no longer have any reason to exist as though it were in its own world as a split off entity.

Nor will there be any contradiction between Poseidon's actions that first are hostile and later are benevolent and bring many gifts, and that both Polyphemus and the Phaeacians, who fill him with gifts, speak about.

This process that here seems complete can be better observed in Ulysses' encounters first with Circe and later with Calypso. These two women are goddesses, not monsters, but they are dangerous, powerful goddesses at that. As Homer points out, they are goddesses who would like to keep Ulysses imprisoned in their homes forever.

In both cases Hermes comes to Ulysses' aid and not only is Ulysses saved, but he manages to transform both of the women from bad to good.

With the help of the "moly" herb that Hermes gives to Ulysses, the sorceress Circe's potions no longer have any power over him. His companions are freed and Ulysses and Circe begin a love story that will last for a year.

We finally see that Ulysses is able to enjoy the love a woman offers him and this had never happened before.

We see how Circe offers Ulysses all of her knowledge, and she also gives him the impossible ability to descend into Hades while still alive. There he encounters Teireisias, who will tell him what his return to Ithaca will be like.

Circe is ready to also give him immortality if Ulysses decides to marry her, but Ulysses refuses and the goddess lets him leave without any rancor.

Here we see how it is possible to transform a negative mother into a positive one, a possessive mother into a giving one.

With the goddess Calypso the process takes longer and the transformation takes place only at the very end, thanks to Zeus who intervenes after being exhorted by Athena to do so. He sends Hermes his messenger to free Ulysses from his prison on Ogygia.

Calypso complains a bit and speaks about the gods' envy, but she eventually gives in and teaches Ulysses how to build a raft and gives him the rules for nocturnal navigation at sea.

This is a symbol of a second transformation of the negative mother into a positive one and it is the result of Ulysses acting together with his *Personal SELF* and the *Cosmic SELF*. This happens after having cried and prayed for many days on the cliffs overhanging the endless sea.

I explain in chapter XVII, when I speak of intrauterine incest, why it took many years for this transformation to take place. This is the strongest bond that is established between mother and child as early as the prenatal phase.

It is not easy for a child to renounce all the types of complicity that are established between itself and the seductive, enchanting mother. It takes time to dissolve each one, one after another.

Penelope, too, is in such complicity with the mother, and it becomes obvious in the great narcissistic pleasure she indulges in when she is surrounded by and courted by more than one hundred suitors.

She says she would like to put an end to their arrogant, endless siege, but when she learns that Ulysses has killed them all she expresses no joy whatsoever.

Even when she dreams of an eagle who kills her geese and Ulysses explains to her that the eagle is her husband who will soon come to kill the Suitors, Penelope, in her dream, cries over the death of her geese. While awake she gives no importance whatsoever to the interpretation that Ulysses offers of her dream.

Is Penelope an adult woman, or is she still a child who depends on her mother?

We all carry the split between good and bad mother to some extent.

And we all carry a strong bond made of both love and hatred, where hatred binds her to us even more than love.

We all want our freedom but we are afraid that if we lose the mother we will lose our base of security.

Those who do not have the courage to make these painful separations from childish love and, especially, from repressed hatred, renounce their ability to become an adult a bit more every day, and they castrate all of their own potential.

Whereas Klein attributes this relationship between mother and child to the oral phase, through my extensive experience I have come to the conclusion that it must be moved up to the prenatal phase.

Homer had understood this 2,500 years ago.

Winnicott affirms that there are no perfect mothers and it would already be something if we each could be assured a "sufficiently good mother".

It is also true that, objectively speaking, there are good mothers who suddenly become bad mothers who are willing to kill their own children, as does Medea to get revenge on Jason for betraying her. Many mothers do the same, as we can often see in the news.

According to Cosmo-Art, the most important thing we must do is recognize the fact that our biological parents are only intermediaries between ourselves and Life.

Life is our true mother and the Universe is our real father. We must center our lives around them, and not around our biological parents. It is also important to ask why we have the biological parents we have, and not better ones like we would have wanted. Nothing happens by chance, there is always a reason behind everything that

has to do with what it is we must learn from life, and what kind of beauty we are here to create.

CHAPTER XXXIV

WHO ARE THE PHAEACIANS, ANYWAY?

I think that the Phaeacians are the symbol of the happy, welcoming womb that we all would have liked to have had and that we did not find when we entered our own mother's womb.

The way that Ulysses gets there is very significant.

When he is struck by a furious storm started by Poseidon, after having navigated for 18 days and 18 nights on the raft that he built with Calypso's help, the nymph Ino, daughter of Cadmus, appears. She begs him to take off the elaborate robes the goddess had given him, to leave the raft and jump into the sea if he wants to save his life. (Isn't the journey that the fecundated egg makes when it is going down the tubes and it enters the uterus turbulent and stormy?)

First Ulysses does not want to listen to her, but then he decides to face the sea and try to reach land with the help of the veil Ino offers him.

A terrible rocky cliff with sharp crags rises up before him and he realizes there is no way he can land.

He is at great risk of being smashed to pieces, because the furious waves first smack him against the rocks and then the violent undertow grabs him and takes him back out to sea.

The rocky coastline is impenetrable and Ulysses is once again overcome by a terrible fear of dying. Does the zygote feel the same type of anguish when it tries to attach itself to the uterine walls and finds that they are hard and sharp and are trying to push it away and reject it?

While being thrown about, fortunately the marine currents drag Ulysses towards another part of the island and here he sees the mouth of a river.

This is the special moment in which Ulysses can decide whether to continue living life as a thief, using his will power, or whether he will begin considering life a gift.

The anguish he has gone through has tempered his hybris and Ulysses learns the wisdom of asking for the gift of his life, instead of continuing to impose his will and his arrogant demands like he has always done before (see A.M. *"La vita come opera d'arte e la vita come dono spiegata in 41 film"* {Life as a Work of Art and Life as a Gift explained in 41 films} Published by the Sophia University of Rome (S.U.R.), Rome, 1995).

It is a great passage indeed when we stop thinking that life is one of our rights, as we all tend to think, and instead begin to feel on a deep level that life is a gift and not a right.

Ulysses humbly addresses the god of the river that he sees before him and begs him to be allowed to swim into its mouth.

This is what he does and then, completely exhausted, he looks for a safe place underneath an olive tree, where he immediately falls to earth and goes to sleep.

He wakes up the next morning, while not far from him Nausicaa's servants play happily after having washed and hung out the laundry.

To pass from living life as thieves to living life as a gift is like a second birth and in book VI Homer beautifully narrates how such a birth comes about.

Nausicaa is life that is blossoming in all its splendor and Ulysses, his heart in his hand, goes toward this life that is offered him. It is completely unexpected and something he would have never believed possible, after two days of being in the storm and with death at his shoulder.

Is this a dream or is it reality?

Whether it is a dream or reality depends on us. It depends on whether after being humiliated by many trials we decide to open ourselves yet again with hope for a better life. It depends on whether or not we decide to abandon our infinite arrogant demands along with the pride of our megalomaniac *I*, that demands to always know how our lives are going to turn out and rebels against anything that opposes our will, as though we were an absolute god from the moment of our conception onward.

To go from hybris to humility, from thievery and arrogant demands to considering life a gift, from violence to tenderness, is not an easy passage.

We all are born thieves and assassins and we hold on to a concept of justice that says that everything that goes the way we want it to is fair, and everything that opposes us is unfair.

All of our hatred and anger originates and germinates on this unhealthy pillar and they damage life, ourselves and others on and on, into eternity.

Ulysses says to Nausicaa the most beautiful words he has ever said to a woman.

*... "a husband and a home may they bring you along with **glorious concordance** as well;
nothing is more beautiful and more precious than this
when with a single soul man and woman run their household;
the malicious are rendered furious
but their friends rejoice and they become well renowned"
(Od. VI, 180-185)*

Most certainly Ulysses meditated upon these words during the seven long years he spent in his prison on Ogygia. They contain all the meaning of life that he discovered as the essence of the goal of Life itself and of the Cosmos.

To meld the *I* and the *You* of a man and woman into a single soul. To meld in a single soul the *I* and the *You* of the entire Universe.

This is the alchemy that creates a synthesis of opposites and from this synthesis a new beauty and a new life, that will be immortal forever, can emerge.

This is the meaning of life that Homer and Ulysses give to us.

The birth of Aphrodite from the frothy waves is an important birth that has been celebrated for a long time by poets, sculptors and painters.

But the birth of Ulysses before Nausicaa is a far more important one.

The first birth celebrates ephemeral beauty, that is here today and gone tomorrow.

The second celebrates the birth of an immortal type of beauty that can travel from one universe to the next, into eternity, without having to fear death anymore.

This Universe was born so this type of beauty could be created; Ulysses and Penelope were born from Homer's imagination so this type of beauty could be created.

The birth of biological life is a beautiful miracle but it is a type of beauty that does not last.

The birth of an artistic masterpiece is a miracle of beauty that lasts throughout the centuries, but it cannot travel from one universe to the next.

The birth of Ulysses before Nausicaa is a miracle of beauty that has lasted for millennia, but it is a symbol of the type of birth that is a prelude to the birth of immortal life, that only the fusion of cosmic and human forces can create. Every living being and the entire universe tends towards creating this type of immortal life.

CHAPTER XXXV

ULYSSES, FROM POWERLESSNESS TO HUMILITY THAT IS THE OPPOSITE OF HYBRIS.

I have wondered for a long time over how it is that Homer leads Ulysses to transform his arrogant heart into a humble one. The answer I have found is that this miracle happens as Ulysses learns to accept every situation where he is powerless throughout his long odyssey.

Life oftentimes presents us with situations in which we are either slightly powerless or completely so. Human beings can react in a wide variety of ways.

We can react with homicidal or suicidal urges, rebelling in every way, and we can react by deeply accepting these situations, bending our own will power and exploring humility.

This second way is the one Ulysses chooses to take and in the following pages I will cite all the sections in the poem where this change can be seen.

When on his ship Ulysses passes under the mountain where Scylla hides, Ulysses is completely powerless. He cannot defend himself from Scylla, who jumps suddenly from its cave and its six heads devour six of Ulysses' companions in the blink of an eye.

Circe had warned him that it was useless to use his sword against Scylla but Ulysses has already forgotten the warning.

When Ulysses goes into Polyphemus' cave he is not completely powerless, but he cannot stop Polyphemus from eating six of his companions, two at a time.

His first reaction is rage and homicidal urges, but he manages to stop and think.

By stopping he realizes that if he kills Polyphemus he will condemn everyone within the cave to death.

When Ulysses reaches the island of the Laestrygonians, the Laestrygonians devour the crews from 11 of the ships in Ulysses' fleet, and Ulysses can do nothing to stop them.

Ulysses can only swallow the pain of this loss and escape as quickly as he can on the twelfth ship.

When Ulysses falls asleep at the tiller and his envious companions open the ox-skin, which Aeolus had given him and that contained the winds that would be against him while sailing, the winds fly out in a second and his ship is thrown off course. They had just had a glimpse of the mountains of Ithaca, and after this happens the mountains disappear from view.

Ulysses returns to Aeolus to ask that he give him the same gift again, but Aeolus does not hesitate to kick him out, which throws him into total despair and powerlessness.

To rebel would not work, so he must accept all the humiliation and make use of it.

Ulysses can defend himself from Circe and keep her from turning him into an animal, as she has already done to his companions by turning them into swine. He can also make sure his companions return to their human state.

But if he hadn't had help from Hermes he would have again been in a state of total powerlessness; he was wise to listen to Hermes, but had he not done so he too would have become a swine.

When Ulysses passes in front of the island of the Sirens, since Circe had warned him he can save himself from the fatal attraction by having his companions tie him to the mast and plugging their ears with wax.

When Ulysses goes through the strait where Charybdis is found, he can defend himself from the impetuous vortex by grabbing on to the branches of a fig tree. But when before he had passed by the mountain where Scylla was hiding, he had again been thrown into a situation of complete powerlessness.

When after leaving Calypso's island Ulysses is just about to reach the island of the Phaeacians, Poseidon attacks him with a terrible storm and Ulysses spends three days and three nights between life and death.

The storm finally calms down but Ulysses is again faced with total powerlessness because he cannot avoid being smashed against the rocks and he cannot find a place to come to shore.

He finally manages to do so when he overcomes his arrogance and humbly prays the river god to welcome him into his gravelly river bed.

He also humbly prays the Phaeacian queen to help him, following Nausicaa's and Athena's advice: he throws himself at her knees and thus he finally finds a full welcome and will be able to have his dream come true and be taken home to Ithaca.

And yet again, when Ulysses must face the violence of the Suitors, who have settled in his house and arrogantly devour his goods, Ulysses is at first in a state of powerlessness and he must withstand all the humiliations that the Suitors wish to inflict on him, without any possibility of reacting to them.

The Suitor's plot to kill Ulysses, which is also Penelope's plot, since she is the one who allows the potential assassins of her husband and son into her house, reminds me of what happened to me in my own prenatal experience. From the stories my mother often told me, I know with absolute certainty that she wanted me and how hard she tried so she could get pregnant. This does not mean that she then did not try more than once to kill me, due to her huge feelings of guilt. I deduct this from the fact that when I was six months old I almost died, because there were traces of arsenic in my mother's milk. I didn't die, but my skin, which was normally very white, suddenly became very dark, and it is still that way today even though I haven't been out in the sun for years.

During my long experience in human relationships, I have established intense friendships with dozens of people.

Some of these, though, have tried to kill me physically (this happened when I was in Holland and I kept a man from being involuntarily committed to a psychiatric hospital by the parents of his wife, who was trying to get rid of her husband).

Some others have specifically threatened to kill me and many others suddenly turned from being friends to enemies. They plotted to kill me not physically but in many other ways and this caused me immense pain.

The fetus often has to withstand violence while in the mother's womb. Mood changes that the mother goes through, caused either by painful situations that suddenly come upon her or by her feelings of rejection towards the baby, are perceived as violence by the fetus.

How can we forget the beautiful book written by Marie Cardinal, "The Words to Say It", where she tells about all her mother's conscious attempts to abort her daughter?

A child in the womb cannot defend itself from this type of violence, and has to suffer through it.

Sometimes it can defend itself through defense mechanisms that allow it to repress and deny the pain and hatred that are caused by these sudden or prolonged types of violence.

But when the child becomes an adolescent or an adult all these types of violence will rear up again in the form of existential trauma. The pain that will emerge is not pain that involves just the present, it is, above all, pain that originated in the past and that was only repressed and denied.

While it may be true that Ulysses finds himself either totally or partially powerless and cannot defend himself in the way he would like from the violence perpetrated upon him by all the devouring, seductive, possessive, phallic and castrating mothers he encounters, the day does come when he can learn to transform

his hybris into profound humility. This happens after he has experienced thousands of painful situations, and has accepted them and transformed them into powerful tools that increase his strength and his internal power. He can thus fully express his cunning, his physical strength and his abilities as a warrior and can pass from powerlessness to personal power. He can then destroy the devouring, seductive, phallic and castrating mother in one fell swoop, and vindicate himself for all the wrongs done him and all the death threats that filled his life with anguish up to that point.

Just as his pain over his powerlessness was once enormous, now his joy for being able to turn his relationship with his mother around becomes just as big.

Just as before he was possessed, devoured and threatened with death, now he is the one who has power over his mother and he can decide to either destroy her or forgive her.

Homer's immense genius manages to show us both revenge and forgiveness within the same episode.

The Suitors are massacred along with the servants who betrayed him by sleeping with them, but Penelope is forgiven, in contrast to the other version of the myth, in which she is instead killed as well.

The Suitors don't represent only arrogant demands and hybris. They also represent the devouring, phallic mother who believes she can determine her children's right to live or die at will, by constantly manipulating them through seduction, blackmail and threats.

It took Ulysses ten years to transform his arrogant heart into a humble heart. At that point it is he who has complete power over his life, instead of the omnipotent mother object.

I also wonder what Penelope, who has a heart of stone, did to transform herself so that she, too, could obtain a humble heart.

We know that her heart is of stone from Ulysses and Telemachus:

Ulysses says:

*"My dear, among all women the gods who dwell on Olympus
made your heart the hardest of them all;
not even a woman whose **heart is so stubborn**
could stay away from a man who, after suffering so much,
returns after twenty years to the land of his forefathers.
But come, nurse, make my bed; I will sleep alone
if necessary: this woman's **heart is made of iron**".
(Od. XXIII, 166-172)*

And Telemachus adds:

Telemachus scolded her and said:

*“Mother dear, sad mother, with an insensitive heart,
Why do you sit so far from my father, why not sit
close to him, why not ask him questions, and listen to his answers?
Not even a woman whose **heart is so stubborn**
could stay away from a man who, after suffering so much,
returns after twenty years to the land of his forefathers.
But as always **your heart is harder than stone**”.*
(Od. XXIII, 96-103)

What we know about Penelope is that she had cried all those years hoping for her husband's return and that she made up lies to keep the Suitors at bay. But this does not tell us anything about her transformation.

She asks Ulysses the stranger how to interpret her dream about the geese who are killed by the eagle but then she rejects his interpretation.

Does she, too, go through feelings of powerlessness, where she learns how to soften her heart and I just can't see it, like I can in regards to Ulysses?

One thing I do see: the transformation has happened, because only a woman who has a humble heart and not an arrogant one could listen to Ulysses' stories about his adventures with other women without becoming furiously angry and without making yet more plans to kill him.

CHAPTER XXXVI

FROM POWERLESSNESS TO VIRILE PERSONAL POWER BEFORE THE DEVOURING MOTHER

To be able to accept and fully experience powerlessness and center oneself on the *Cosmic SELF* are the two ways that Homer indicates can help us acquire the type of virile personal power that we need to overcome the devouring mother.

Ulysses' encounter with the devouring mother is presented by Homer in the *Odyssey* in six different episodes:

The first encounter comes about in Polyphemus' cave.

Ulysses must first watch in absolute powerlessness while Polyphemus begins devouring his companions two at a time. Then, once his rage has passed, he is capable of figuring out a plan to get out of such powerlessness and save himself.

This powerlessness is similar to the kind one can feel in regards to the abuse of power witnessed in certain human interactions or couple relationships.

The second encounter happens when the Laestrygonians devour the crews of the eleven ships that had entered the port before Ulysses got there and could quickly turn them around and sail to safety.

This type of powerlessness is similar to what human beings can feel when faced with an environmental catastrophe.

The third encounter comes about in the palace of the sorceress Circe, when a part of Ulysses' companions are turned into swine and where Ulysses himself stays on a whole year to enjoy the favors of the beautiful Circe.

Thanks to Hermes, Ulysses has enough power so that he can subdue Circe and not become a victim of her magic.

This time the power to enjoy the devouring mother and give her pleasure as well overcomes the fear of being devoured. No damage is done and favors are received.

This passage from powerlessness to personal power, with Hermes' help, is reserved only for those who are willing to work hard to pass from ignorance to knowledge and from childhood to adulthood. Knowledge does confer power, but the decision to grow and to step away from the world of the mother at any cost confers much more.

The fourth encounter comes about in the Strait of Messina, where Scylla strikes Ulysses' ship in an instant and devours six of Ulysses' companions with its six heads.

Here Ulysses is completely powerless and he can only watch, feeling great pain, while his companions are devoured.

This type of pain is similar to the pain we feel when we are powerless before natural catastrophes like earthquakes, tsunami and hurricanes. One must only escape as quickly as possible; there is no other way to save oneself.

The fifth encounter happens when Ulysses is shipwrecked on Calypso's island and the beautiful nymph keeps him prisoner in her bed for seven long years.

Here pain is mixed with pleasure and pleasure turns into constant tears, that Ulysses sheds by day while sitting at the island's rocky shoreline.

This powerlessness and this imprisonment very often rise from an incestuous attachment to the mother and from the decision to be subjugated by her needs in exchange for her love.

The sixth encounter comes about in the palace at Ithaca, where more than one hundred Suitors have Penelope under siege, passing the time stuffing themselves, devouring Ulysses' goods and planning both his and Telemachus' death.

Here Ulysses gradually builds his personal power as he goes through the most intense humiliations, and finally, with the help of Athena, his son Telemachus, the swineherd Eumaeus and the cow-herder Philoetius, he can completely destroy the devouring mother's horde, represented so well by the Suitors.

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE SUITORS

Homer speaks at length about the Suitors right at the beginning of the poem (Od. I and II).

What he says is that they have an *arrogant heart* (Od. I, 103).

This description is the most concise and the best that Homer offers all throughout the poem.

During modern times there are many people with an arrogant heart and so I decided to describe them in a decalogue that was the central theme of an international congress held by the Sophia University of Rome in Belgium, 1995.

DECALOG – A PORTRAIT OF MODERN MAN

*or ten points to reflect on to understand better what exactly the
existential lie is, that we live inside of like
so many fish in water.*

- 1) I am an Absolute and everyone must bow down before me and adore me as if I
were a God.
Whoever dares to oppose me will be crushed like a worm.
- 2) Truth is based on whatever I think and whatever I feel. I never lie; I am the
Truth. Others are always at fault. I will never budge one inch from my point of
view. Those who do not offer me recognition do not have the right to exist. I don't
have to recognize anyone else. I am entitled to everything.
- 3) I am innocent, actually I am an innocent victim; the others are always guilty. I
don't want them to live and I will kill them with the poison of my hatred and my
disdain.
I am Right and I am always in the right. Whoever dares to cross me will pay
dearly for it into eternity.
There is no way that any reparation can satisfy me.
- 4) Only my will must be done and whoever is not willing to bend to it will be
eliminated forever.
My weapons? Seduction, phallic power, blackmail and threats.
- 5) Only I exist and everyone else is at my service.

Whoever rebels against me and does not want to serve me shall be condemned to hell. My needs and my projections always come first!
The others are my rug and I am a bulldozer.

- 6) Everything that exists is mine. I steal whatever does not belong to me and if I cannot steal it, I destroy it or I break it.
Nothing can cure my envy.
Nothing can satiate my greed and voracity.
- 7) I am the law. There is no law above me.
I dictate the rules of the game and I change them when I feel like it.
I am power. There is no power greater than mine.
Everyone must obey me; I don't have to obey anyone.
- 8) I am pure, I am a saint and my saintliness is everywhere. My honorability is my highest value. The unconscious? I don't have one. The others have one, of course, and theirs are full of hatred and evil.
If they do not publicly confess their guilt, I will punish them with universal judgment.
I am the strongest, so says the penal code.
- 9) I am always perfect. I don't have to correct anything about myself. I don't have improve in any way.
I don't ever have to apologize; I don't have to ask anyone's forgiveness for anything.
- 10) I don't want to die. I cannot die. I am Eternal.
I will nurture my eternity by killing off the others.

(see A.M. *"La nascita della cosmo-art"* {The Birth of Cosmo-Art}, pgs 47-48).

I already spoke of the existential lie in previous pages, but here I would like to add some further reflections.

THE EXISTENTIAL LIE

"The existential lie is a lie that people tell themselves without knowing that they are lying.

It is a lie with which a person denies the truth and denies the reality principle and instead creates a mask, or a cocoon. This way they can defend themselves from the pain that this causes inside themselves, and the name they give the mask is absolute truth.

It is the lie that humans use to deny the existence of their dark sides, their weaknesses and vices or, as Jung would say, of their Shadow. They become anchored

in a false self (Winnicott) and an ideal of perfection that is flawless, through their pride and their arrogant demands.

The existential lie serves to defend oneself from the truth and from the anguish of dying, but it also serves to be able to impose on others one's will to dominate.

It especially serves to affirm one's refusal to be born and to pass from the stage of the *fetal I* to the stage of the *adult I*. When one is immersed in the existential lie it is as if they were never born.

Now if we think about it, life asks human beings to be born at least three times.

The first is our biological birth.

The second is the birth of the reality principle.

The third is the birth of the principle of truth and the principle of responsibility.

As far as biological birth goes, modern medicine has made sufficient progress to be able to assure this for many, lowering the number of infantile deaths to a minimum.

As far as the second and third births go, in my opinion there is not yet a science that is sufficiently developed to assure that many will be born. This is true because for these births it is not only a question of science but of science and art".

(see A.M. "*La nascita della cosmo-art*" {The Birth of Cosmo-Art} , pgs. 45-46).

In the introduction to the Group Laboratory of Existential Anthropology of the Sophia University of Rome (S.U.R.) on 13-14 May, 1995, I wrote:

"If we define the existential lie as a partial truth that is rendered absolute by the *megalomaniac I*, it is the job of the *I Person* to ask itself what exactly its absolute truths are, and how a truth can become a lie as soon as it is isolated from the principle of reality or it is thought of and affirmed in contraposition to the principle of reality.

The pleasure principle says: only I exist and everyone else only exists to serve me. And it is well known that the pleasure principle accepts the principle of reality only when it is forced to.

Another important reflection must be added, which regards the coexistence and the predominance of the *fetal I* over the *adult I*. I am speaking of the *fetal I* and not the *infantile I*; I am referring to that *I* that developed in the maternal womb, during the nine months of intrauterine life and that, because of the trauma it experienced there, has no intention of leaving the uterus even many years after biological birth.

The principle of reality of the *fetal I* does not at all correspond to the principle of reality of the *adult I*.

For the *fetal I* the only reality that counts is its survival and wellbeing. All the rest is not real and, if it is, it is only in relation to the type of damage and offense that it did to the *fetal I*'s ideal of perfection.

This *I* that necessarily develops as one that is wounded and offended, due to the fact that it develops in a uterus that is polluted and lacking, like that of most women today in this particular historical moment, knows only one reality and one truth: the infinite, arrogant demand that its wound be recognized and at the same time the refusal to accept any type of reparation for its wounds. This is because in this situation the pleasure principle obtains satisfaction only by getting revenge, that it will carry on for its whole life.

The *fetal I* is not interested in the type of pleasure it would get should its wound be *repaired*, nor does it care about the pleasure and joy it could experience by developing its own creative, transformative power.

The first existential lie is established here, and from this point on it expands and pollutes every relationship between individuals and entire populaces.

To act on this lie and dismantle it means deciding to be born, to grow up and enter into the adult world; it means deciding to be born into the full dimension of human beings as Persons, as beings that belong to a cosmic reality and not just a fetal one.

It means deciding to be born to one's own artistic, creative power and decide to abandon the eternal victim role that is happy only with sadomasochistic pleasure and never with the joy of creating.

It means deciding to choose truth and beauty, instead of lies and ugliness”.

(see A.M. “*La nascita della cosmo-art*” {The Birth of Cosmo-Art} pg. 31).

Explanations on the Decalogue given during the Laboratory activities.

“In Greece, the philosophical schools of thought initially looked at the problem of truth and falsity.

Very quickly some began saying that there is no truth, like the skeptics, the followers of Pyrrho.

This affirmation was then taken up by the Sophists, who demonstrated that any proposition, any affirmation, can be demonstrated as being both true and false at the same time, thus any type of objective truth does not exist.

Then Aristotle and Plato came along and said: truth exists.

Plato found it in the ideas found in the Hyperuraniun, then he looks at the problem of how the limits of the senses can be overcome so as to reach this truth that is found in ideas. Thus truth is found in ideas but unfortunately we are souls trapped in our bodies and our bodies have senses, and through our senses we always end up seeing things in a confused way.

Remember the story of the cave? Plato says: take a man who is in a cave and who is looking at the inner wall of the cave; various figures pass outside the cave and a light projects these shadows on the cave's far wall. The man sees the projection but he can't see anything else because his shoulders are turned towards the cave's

opening. He sees nothing that actually happens at the entrance, he only sees the reflection of it projected on the wall of the cave. This is because of our senses. Thus humanity can only have an approximate knowledge of truth. We can never truly grasp true and certain knowledge of truth, unless we get rid of our body and manage to reach the level of ideas. Only if this is accomplished can we hope to reach the truth.

Then along came Aristotle, who introduced the principle of non-contradiction. If A is A it cannot be B ; in other words, if an affirmation is shown to be true it cannot be false, and if an affirmation is false it cannot be true. However, what is established with certainty is that on the basis of the principle of non-contradiction a truth does exist, and the whole problem resides in demonstrating whether an affirmation is either true or false. If it is true it must be preserved, if it is false it must be eliminated.

Socrates introduces humility for the first time in the history of Western thought, that he masterfully expresses in the phrase: "I know that I don't know".

What is Socrates affirming with this phrase? That at least one certain truth exists. He knows he doesn't know. If he sets out to search for truth, either alone or with others, he and the others can reach some kind of truth. This phrase contains above all another truth: if he, Socrates, manages to dismantle the prejudices of the person he is talking to, prejudices that are taken as being truths, then later Socrates can find a truth together with those who have accepted to allow that their prejudices be dismantled.

The position of the skeptics has been revisited during modern times by positivist and relativist philosophers. For them relative truths exist and these truths are so relative that again they end up reaching the conclusion that no truth exists.

Socrates' position was instead revisited by Karl Popper, who strongly adheres to Socratic thinking and invites all thinkers, both philosophers and scientists, to become humble in their thinking and their actions and to not assume absolute positions. This is where the novelty lies, in him inviting thinkers to realize that neither the truth that has been found nor an ascertained demonstration of falsity should be rendered absolutes.

Popper is also important because he introduces the concept of existential life history and he asks: should we be pessimists or optimists? Clearly if there is an annihilistic approach at the basis of our thinking, where no objective truth exists, then we have to be pessimists; if, instead, we can reach some sort of truth, then we can be optimistic.

What am I asking you to do here, in practical terms? First of all, I am asking you to put aside your skepticism: there are certainly truths that can be reached and it is not necessary to leave one's body to reach them. Also, in contrast to Aristotle's thought, an affirmation can contain both a truth and a lie, because this is what happens over and over again in relationships and in the context of scientific research as well (for example, Newtonian mechanics is true on one level of reality and it is false on another level, as has been demonstrated by quantum mechanics).

The existential lie, which is what we are focusing on in this laboratory, is different from falsity, because it is a description of a partial reality with an attempt to make it an absolute, while falsity is an affirmation that concerns a reality considered in its totality.

If I say that a certain proposition is a lie, and I am referring to an existential lie, it means that the proposition is partially true and partially false. We can see that in this case I am putting aside the principle of non-contradiction formulated by Aristotle, because according to him if a proposition is true it cannot be false and if it is false it cannot be true. But he did not make any distinction between *lie* and *falsity*.

Another element I wanted to offer you is to discover the importance that all this has in our daily lives and in our relationships. Because if what I think and feel is true, and I demand that this is an absolute truth, this fact will have a negative connotation if I enter into conflict with someone or if I am feeling conflict within myself.

Let's look at conflict with another person. If I am in conflict with someone and I think that what I am feeling is true, and I demand that it be taken as an absolute truth, it is impossible that what the other is thinking and feeling can be just as true. Is this logical? And so it is impossible to arrive at a solution to the conflict, because the contraposition will be there forever, since each person considers their own truth an absolute. Whatever each is thinking and feeling in that moment is the only truth. This means remaining in the context of a subjective truth, that can never be confronted with the truth of another, it can never reach a level of objective truth.

At this point we must add that besides having understood that the first characteristic of a lie is its becoming an *absolute*, "whatever I think and whatever I feel is true" and "it is absolutely true", there are other questions that must be asked.

Another question we could formulate might be: "Whatever I think and whatever I feel is true"; but *which I am I talking about?* Is there a single *I* within us? At a very bare minimum we can say that there is a *fetal I* and an *adult I*; so, if I don't ask myself which *I* is coming into play in the moment it is thinking and feeling, I cannot understand what type of truth I am talking about. The truth that concerns the *fetal I* is different than the one concerns the a post-fetal objective truth. Only the *I* exists in the womb. What about the mother? If I want to I can deny her and decide that she does not exist; only *I* exist in all my omnipotence. But within objective reality, there is an *I* and there are others. I can, of course, deny that others exist just as I have done with my mother, but this does not mean that the others don't really exist.

Someone stated it very clearly by asking: and if I am overtaken by a projection? ... which *I* is acting during a situation like that? A projection can also have its beginnings during intrauterine life, and so it is the *fetal I* that kicks into action. I have no awareness of this *fetal I* so how can I affirm that this is the truth? Which *I* expressed the truth? That which is true for the *Psychological I* can be false for the *I Person*. Which of the two will I listen to?

If I want to be able to express an objective truth it is obligatory to pass from the *fetal I* to the *adult I*.

Yesterday you had quite some difficulty with what you did and why is that? I believe that the reason for this is because of the predominance of the *fetal I*.

The *fetal I* believes that only he exists and the mother only exists in the distance. Essentially, the only thing that exists is the *fetal I*. If the mother does exist she is there only to be at his service. This is one way we can take the experience of the *fetal I* and bring it into our daily experience; as long as the *fetal I* prevails, I will never be able to welcome anyone else's existence, unless they are at my service.

There is another problem within the human being and this is the drive for power. Again, when I ask what the *I* is thinking and feeling, I can ask: is this the *adult I* that is thinking and feeling or is it the *fetal I*? Is this the *Psychological I*, the *I Person*, or maybe the *SELF*? And now I can also ask: is it perhaps the *megalomaniac phallic I*, that always wants to impose its power and its will on others? If this is the case, how can I know that I am within the context of the truth? It is not an easy thing to free ourselves of the need to wield power over others: it requires continuous practice and the ability to face a real crisis and make some real changes to decide to stop acting on our *will to have power over and dominate others*.

We all know how the *I* considers itself an absolute and how it wants to absolutely dominate life and others, how it wants that life and others to do exactly as it wants, as it demands. It is difficult but we must do it, we *must try to free ourselves of an absolute I*; otherwise we can forget about truth and the ability to reach objective truth.

Another question arises that I amply described in the first chapters of the book "*La vie comme oeuvre d'art*" {Life as a Work of Art}: if I am full of hatred, even if I am not completely so but only in part, this hatred originated in my intrauterine experience, this hatred pollutes my being and since *actions follow being*, if I have repressed hatred within me that I am unaware of, when I think I will inevitably think with hatred and not with love. We could say that this is the most immediate and destructive result. Then, since I am not centered only on hatred but also on love, I can also think with love. But if the most immediate thing I am carrying inside is repressed hatred, I will inevitably think with hatred and not with love. And by thinking with hatred, what I am thinking is a truth that is interlaced with a lie, because hatred immediately transforms truth into a lie.

An excellent example of this type of truth that is transformed into a lie can be seen in how Oedipus forces his mother to face the truth and wants her to necessarily face it in the way he is facing it, that is with hatred. The consequence is that his mother hangs herself: this is what Oedipus wanted, but he was unaware of it.

Oedipus hated his mother and he wanted her to hang herself and how did he manage to force her to do so? By using truth, not by using a lie. In those moments he is thinking with hatred, he is not thinking with love, neither towards himself nor towards his mother.

The solution that I have found is that only by using the power of reason, not rationalization, but reason, can we discover our repressed hatred that we have been carrying since our intrauterine experience, the pre-Oedipal phase and the Oedipal phase. By using reason I can discover my repressed hatred. Without reason repressed

hatred cannot be discovered, because repressed hatred does not have access to our sense perception. I cannot feel repressed hatred. Why can't I feel it? Because I did everything possible to repress and deny it, otherwise I would have never survived during intrauterine life. If I have thus done everything possible to not feel it, how could I possibly feel it now? Are you following me here?

It is obvious, then, that when I think and feel, I will think and feel everything except hatred; I will feel my wounds, I will feel the injustice that has been done to me, I will feel my arrogant demands perhaps, but I will definitely not feel hatred, because I have erected a cement wall between myself and my hatred. I have done so because if I hadn't I would have never survived during prenatal life, during the pre-Oedipal phase or during the Oedipal phase.

If I use reason to examine my actions or the actions of others and reflect on them, then I can use reason to also discover my repressed hatred within. Then I can decide to do something to see it and eliminate it.

Let's return now to the question about what the relationship is between the *I* and the *SELF*. If I have established a healthy relationship with my *SELF*, then I can have faith that at the moment I come into contact with my hatred, I can accept myself without killing myself because I am so full of hatred. One possibility to use reason and discover whether or not there is repressed hatred within me is to look at whether there is an internal *I Persecutor* as well as an external one.

The internal *I Persecutor* is created on one hand by the *I Person* that splits off from that part of itself that is the cause of hatred and it transforms itself into an implacable judge towards the same *I Person*: you have repressed hatred within you, thus you are guilty, thus I have to punish you. Instead, the *SELF*'s way of acting in regards to guilt is completely opposite from the way the *I Person* has transformed it into an *I-Persecutor*, because the *SELF* says: you are guilty, you have hatred within you but I want you to free yourself of this hatred and I will give you the means and the love you need to be able to embrace this hatred and transform it.

Only the *SELF* can say this and if the *I Person* opens a dialog with the *SELF* and embraces a positive message that comes from the *SELF*, it can overcome hatred, because it knows that its *SELF* loves it. Thus the *I Person*, centered on the love that the *SELF* offers it, can decide to love itself even though it discovers it is full of hatred and destructivity. It can love itself even though it is full of homicidal urges towards its father or mother or siblings or anyone else. With the *SELF*'s help I can love myself; if I love myself I can embrace myself completely and work on dissolving my hatred.

I have always said: part of this hatred is just and part of it is unjust and out of proportion. This is the vindictive part that does not allow for any type of reparation, it wants only the other's death. Did the other wound me? Then they must die.

The unjust part can be eliminated only with forgiveness (see A.M. "*Amore, Liberta' e Colpa*" {Love, Freedom and Guilt} 2nd edition, Sophia University of Rome).

In this case the type of forgiveness we are talking about has nothing to do with Christian forgiveness; instead it means: I love myself, and if I love myself I want to be done with my need for revenge.

To love myself means that I want to detach myself from my trauma. It may seem incredible, but we are deeply attached to the pain of the trauma we have suffered. We don't want to separate from it, and only forgiveness, that is an act of love towards ourselves, is capable of helping us detach from our trauma and the pain of our trauma and, as a result, from our anger and our need to get revenge.

I hope that the solution I am proposing is clear and that all the various passages described are clear as well.

I have been asked, however, to better explain what the *SELF* is. I have always said that the *SELF* is to the *I Person* like what the sun is to the earth.

What is the sun to the earth? Is there biological, animal, vegetable and human life on the sun? There are none of these life forms and there never will be. However, there is another type of life there, the life of stellar processes, the processes that set off atomic fusion and let off enormous quantities of light, heat and electromagnetic energy, as well as many other types.

These forms of energy, like light and heat, reach earth, which had to – and I underline had to, in the sense that this did not happen by chance – have a particular orbit around the sun. This orbit is different from the orbits of all the other planets and the earth also rotates on itself in a way that is different from the other planets. For this reason, it is illuminated and warmed up in such a way that biological, vegetable, animal and human life can develop. Had the earth not chosen the right orbit and the right rotation, life would not have developed, just as it has not developed on Mercury, or Mars, or Venus, or on the other planets.

By working with this *analogy*, you can discover what the *SELF* is. For the rest I can share with you my personal experience, but only as such, as my own personal experience.

Many times, I have thought about describing my personal experience with how I contact my *SELF* in a book. And many times I have decided not to, because my way of doing so is not necessarily the right way for everyone. I can affirm the existence of the *SELF* because I have experienced it; I can affirm that it is very important to establish a dialog, an open bridge between the *I* and the *SELF*, because this was my own salvation; but how to make this contact is something that each person must find for themselves. I have also told you: the *SELF* speaks to us from both within ourselves and from outside; everything that you feel within you can be the voice of the *SELF* and everything that happens in the external world that touches you in some way, is the voice of the *SELF*. It is up to each one of you to learn to read it, to interpret it and to unify your external and internal worlds.

Just to offer a bit more substance to what I am saying, I was born from a mother who wanted a female and not a male. When I started asking myself: why did the *SELF* have me be born into such a situation? I can stop thinking that this is an injustice, and I can instead try to understand why. There is most certainly an answer, this did

not happen by chance. I do the same thing with everything else that happens to me. I ask myself; Why has my *SELF* put me in this situation? What does it want from me? What is the project here for me?

In this way, I can unify my internal and external worlds. My internal world clearly is not made up only of the voice of the SELF ; it is also made up of the voice of the *Corporeal I*, the voice of the *Psychological I* and the *I Person*. These are three realities that are very different from each other, and I must unify all these realities into one. Listening to a chorus, we hear many voices but only one melody. The *I Person* who acts as an artist can bring all the voices together and fuse them into one.”

(see A.M. “*La nascita della cosmo-art*” {The Birth of Cosmo-Art} pgs. 37-43)

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE SUITORS AND THE POISON OF ARROGANT DEMANDS

The many quotes that follow have helped me delve more deeply into the importance of the theme of the Suitors, which most of the *Odyssey* is based on. Many writers who have worked on this poem often underestimate this theme.

In my opinion, Homer is saying; if the Suitors are not exterminated, *secondary beauty* cannot be created.

If this creation is, as I affirm, the basic theme of the *Odyssey*, we can then understand why Homer only uses eight books, from V to XIII, to tell about the “nostos”, Ulysses’ return to Ithaca, whereas he uses nine of them, from XIV to XXIII to describe the massacre of the Suitors and XXIV to talk about how they ended up in Hades.

Out of twenty-four books, the first four are dedicated to the introduction and to Telemachus, eight to telling about Ulysses’ return and ten to describe the massacre of the Suitors.

In the first four books, Homer already mentions the Suitors and he describes them in a forboding manner.

If there were not a thread that unites all the books, from the first to the last, there would be an internal imbalance in the poem’s structure. This would cause there to be doubt regarding Homer’s greatness as a poet and it would be difficult to understand why this poem had become so famous among readers of all times.

This thread begins with Zeus’ invitation to value wisdom during the introduction and it winds through the whole story, in describing the passage from wisdom to art. The art we are dealing with is the art of self – transformation and the art of knowing how to create *secondary beauty*.

The thing that most opposes wisdom is greed and hybris and in the poem the ones who are principally accused of these vices are Aegisthus, the Suitors and Ulysses’ companions. Due to this madness on their part, they all end up dying.

The Suitors symbolize many different realities all put together: hybris, arrogance, greed, envy, stealing, homicidal and suicidal urges, the devouring mother and the phallic assassin mother. But what they especially represent is the *fetal I* and its infinite arrogant demands.

It is correct to think of the Suitors only as a reality that exists separately, completely on its own.

The Suitors are also a metaphor and an external materialization of the internal *fetal I* of both Ulysses and Penelope.

Killing the Suitors means killing the *fetal I* that is a part of Ulysses and Penelope.

The *fetal I* has always invaded men and women's existential space. There is no room inside for the *adult I* and the *artistic I* that are capable of creating a type of beauty that does not yet exist, and that once created acquires immortal life.

Homer's poems are not history books and the characters found in the Odyssey are not historical figures. What is historical is the fact that between the people described by Homer three thousand years ago, and those that exist today, there is really no substantial difference.

Yet today many continue to destroy themselves and many tend to dominate others.

There are very few people who courageously decide to descend into the abyss of intrauterine life so they can capture the monster that is the *fetal I*, and conquer it forever.

Many continue to live life as thieves and with violence and few are violent with themselves instead of being violent with others.

Therefore, the *artistic I* within them never emerges, and beauty and the *concordance* of living with a *You* and with others never become possible.

Unfortunately, it is not a historical fact that one battle is enough to exterminate the Suitors, which is what happens for Ulysses.

My own bitter experience tells me that many battles are necessary, and one must never lose hope in reaching one's destination.

One thing that I still cannot decipher is why Ulysses needs the swineherd Eumaeus and the cowherd Philoetius to massacre the Suitors. It could be that this choice has to do with his decision to go into his own house dressed in the rags of a beggar, meaning he decides to leave behind his hybris and to dress himself with the most sincere and most authentic humility.

I do understand why Ulysses massacres the servant girls who were flirting with the Suitors.

I see that as being the type of complicity that the *adult I* can often show towards the *fetal I*, and how this complicity must be destroyed.

An individual human being is born as if it were a nebula that is the result of the explosion of billions of protogalaxies. Then, through continuous transformations it must become a star, and from this star the light that can travel through infinite spaces

is born. This light carries energy and information that produce a new type of beauty that does not yet exist.

Ulysses is the immortal archetype of this journey and this type of creation. Aegisthus, who kills Agamemnon to take over his power, and the Suitors, who devour everything in Ulysses' house and plot both his and Telemachus' deaths, are the symbol for all those who refuse to embrace this cosmic plan that Life has initiated and choose, instead, death and nothingness.

Already during the council of the gods, at the beginning of the poem, Athena speaks with Zeus about the Suitors:

*Meanwhile I will go to Ithaca, to encourage
the son and put strength in his heart,
so that by calling the long-haired Achaeans to the council,
he can force them to go to the suitors, who are always
slitting the throats of his fat sheep and his oxen with crooked hooves and
moon-shaped horns (Od. I, 88-92)*

They are again mentioned when Athena arrives at Ulysses' palace:

*Mentes, the leader of the Taphians, was like a guest.
He found the suitors to be arrogant: they were playing
with their pawns in front of the door, having fun,
seated on the skins of the oxen they slaughtered
(Od. I, 105-108)*

And suddenly Telemachus sees her:

*Telemachus, similar to a god, saw her for the first time;
he was sitting among the suitors, with a tortured soul,
dreaming in his heart of his noble father, if he would suddenly come
and free the house of all the suitors,
giving him back his honor and his ownership of his goods.
This is what he was dreaming of, while seated among the suitors; and he
saw Athena.
(Od. I, 113-118)*

After Telemachus has welcomed her with all the attentions of a good host, again Homer shifts our attention back to the Suitors:

*Meanwhile the arrogant suitors came back inside; they immediately
sat in line on the seats and thrones.
And the heralds poured water on their hands,
the servant girls brought bread in baskets,
the young men filled the vases with wine.
Then on the ready food being served they threw themselves
(Od. I, 144-149)*

They are the princes from Ithaca and from the nearby islands. They are arrogant and they only care about devouring Ulysses' riches.

This is what Telemachus emphasizes just a few verses later:

*of course! because they shamelessly devour ,
another man's riches whose white bones are rotting in the rain
somewhere on land, or perhaps they are rolling in the waves.
But if they were to see him return here to Ithaca,
they would all become even faster on their feet ,
than they are rich with gold and splendid outfits (Od. I, 160-165)*

Even Athena has bitter words to say about them:

*they seem so insolent, such lowlifes that banquet
in the hall. Anyone, any wise man who would enter
would be disgusted, to see so much shame".
(Od. I, 227-229)*

Telemachus adds more, even harsher, words:

*All the most noble who are powerful on the islands,
Dulichium, Same and the wooded Zacynthus,
and all the princes on Ithaca,
they all want my mother and they destroy my house.
She neither refuses the hated nuptials, nor does she have the courage
to go through with them; in the meantime the Suitors are ruining my house
with their banquets and soon they will tear me to pieces as well». (Od. I, 245-251)*

Athena answers, shocked:

*And Pallades Athena said to him, shocked,
"My dear, you truly need Odysseus who is so far away,
so he could put his hands on those shameless suitors.
(Od. I, 252-254).*

Athena has no doubt: the Suitors must be exterminated:

*When you will have finished doing everything,
ponder deeply and at length
how you can massacre the suitors in your home,
whether deceiving them, from hiding, or openly so: you must not
act like a child, because you are no longer the age of one.
(Od. I, 293-297)*

Athena's strongest argument is made in reference to Orestes. Just as he killed his father's assassin, Telemachus should do the same so he can be glorified.

*Can't you see what glory Orestes the divine brought himself
among all men, by killing his father's assassin,
Aegisthus the deceiver, who had killed his noble father?
You too, my dear, since you are able and handsome,
Be strong, so that there will be those who praise you in future generations.
(Od. I, 298-302)*

This last reference is very important for our purposes, because it is the central theme within Greek literature that indicates the need not for revenge, as it would seem at first, but for a decision to step out of the maternal dimension, and enter into the paternal one.

This decision is of utmost importance, and it requires overcoming the fear of death. Very few mothers allow their children to make this step forward, and very many of them threaten those children who dare do so against their will.

A death threat hangs over Telemachus as well, that doesn't come from his mother directly, but from the Suitors. But isn't it Penelope who allows the Suitors to settle in and take over Ulysses' palace, as though they owned it?

This is Antinous' reasoning with respect to Telemachus and his journey to Pylos:

*and Antinous the son of Eupeithes spoke to them,
irately; his black heart swollen with rage,
his eyes were like flaming fire:
"Ah, Telemachus has acted truly with great insolence
by taking this trip: and we said he would never do it.
The boy has gone despite our number,
he put his ship to sea, with the best crew possible.
He will guide them against us in the future: but may
Zeus first destroy his power, before he reaches young adulthood!
Come now, give me a fast ship and twenty companions,
I will go and ambush him by first spying on him
in the Strait between Ithaca and rocky Same:
may he sail into trouble while looking for his father!"
This is what he said, and all the others encouraged him on, agreeing...
(Od. IV, 660-673)*

.....The herald Medonte runs to Penelope to tell her what the Suitors are plotting.

*And the wise Medonte answered her:
"Ah my queen, if this were only the worst of all evils!
Many more grave and terrible things, instead
your suitors are plotting: may Chronide not allow it!"*

*They want to kill Telemachus with a sharp bronze sword,
as soon as he returns home: he has gone looking for news of his father
in sacred Pylos and in splendid Lacedemone" (Od. IV, 695-703).*

This is an important key to understanding the Odyssey's main theme: Ulysses, Penelope and Telemachus must all break their ties to their internalized mother and they must become capable of passing from the maternal dimension to the paternal dimension, from the paternal dimension to the cosmic dimension.

This is why they must center their lives on their *Personal SELF* (Athena) and their *Cosmic SELF* (Zeus) and, above all, understand what Cosmic purpose the Universe, the great Father, assigns to the lives of human beings in an evolutionary sense. Cosmo-Artistic anthropology describes this purpose as the search for a type of immortality that helps human beings detach from *primary beauty* and *the beauty of life* so they can create *secondary beauty* and with it a type of immortal life that can travel forever from one universe to another.

This is why the thesis put forth by some that the first book of the Odyssey was written to connect the Telemachia to the rest of the poem is misleading. It does not take into consideration what I have tried to explain regarding what is, in my opinion, the fundamental theme that Homer is proposing by writing the Odyssey.

If he speaks at length about the Suitors and the need to exterminate them, this is because with these characters Homer wants to use strong images to describe the evil that gnaws at human beings inside of themselves: arrogant demands, hybris, self-righteousness, greed and homicidal and suicidal urges. These evils are what make people turn away from the cosmic purpose and devote themselves to consuming and destroying life instead of accepting pain, wisdom and the art of becoming capable of creating the world of *secondary beauty*.

The Suitors stay in the house of Ulysses, Penelope and Telemachus, which is the same thing as saying they are inside of Ulysses, Penelope and Telemachus. Each one of them must undertake a battle to exterminate them within themselves, with Athena and Zeus' help.

To think that this might happen in just one day is nothing more than another arrogant demand for omnipotence. Lengthy preparation and a firm decision are necessary to be able to gradually exterminate these evils, with great steadfastness and hope, like our heroes do.

This extermination could be seen by many as a type of revenge acted out by Ulysses and Telemachus, and the word revenge is, in fact, sometimes used in the poem.

However, Homer makes other statements that have a very different meaning than revenge.

The killing of Aegisthus, which first Zeus speaks of and then Athena mentions when she is speaking with Telemachus, is not revenge. It is just punishment that human beings bring on themselves when they “act against duty”, as Homer says.

*it's because of their mad crimes **against duty** that they suffer. (Od. I, 34)*

and the next verse says:

*And so now Aegisthus has taken **against duty** his woman*

Athena uses two different terms, “revenge” and “get them out of the house”.

*But this lies on the gods' lap,
whether or not he should get revenge, on returning
to his home. In the meanwhile think seriously
about how to get the suitors out of your house:
(Od. I, 267-270)*

Revenge “lies on the lap of the gods”. This means that it is a decision that the gods must make, not human beings. To the contrary, the decision to get the Suitors out of the house, along with everything they represent, is one that human beings must make.

The problem can be resolved even better if we accept the principle I mentioned before:

“Just as an infinite number of lines that are completely opposite from each other pass through a single point, an infinite number of motives that are completely opposite from each other pass through every human action.”

This means that within any one of Ulysses' actions there can be two motives present that are completely opposite from each other: one can be to get revenge on the suitors and the other can be to exterminate his own and Penelope's arrogant demands, his own and Penelope's hybris.

When Athena encounters Ulysses on the beach in Ithaca, the goddess tells him very clearly that the Suitors must be killed:

*Then the two, seated at the foot of a sacred olive tree,
meditated on the death of the arrogant suitors.
Blue-eyed Athena began speaking:
“Divine son of Laertes, cunning Odysseys,
think about how you can get your hands on those arrogant suitors,
(Od. XIII, 372-376)*

And responding the sharp Odysseus said:

*“Ah, just like Agamemnon Atrides
I would have reached a miserable end in my own palace,
if you, oh goddess, had not told me clearly every thing.
Go on, you plan how I can get revenge,
and stay near me, inspiring me with brave strength,
(Od. XIII, 382-387)*

I too, just like the Suitors, am deeply attached to *primary beauty* and, just like them, I want to take possession of the beauty that belongs to life with my arrogant demands, my arrogance and greed; I want to use it and consume it and devour it, creating ugliness and not beauty.

However, like Ulysses, I too have been travelling for almost forty years so I can face the thousands of woes that come from my intrauterine experiences and from daily life, and make the passage from the maternal dimension to the paternal dimension. I do this so I can become capable of centering myself on the purpose of the *Cosmic SELF* (the father beyond the father).

This purpose speaks to me of a special type of beauty that I can create by transforming myself and helping others transform themselves, and by becoming an artist of my life and the life of the universe.

I have explored these ideas at length in my other books: *The Ulysseans*, Published by the Sophia University of Rome (S.U.R.), 2009, “*La nascita della cosmo-art*” {The Birth of Cosmo-Art}, Published by the Sophia University of Rome (S.U.R.), 2000 “*Theorems and Axioms of Cosmo-Art*”, Published by the Sophia University of Rome (S.U.R.), 2009, “*The Myth of Ulysses and Secondary Beauty*”, published by the Sophia University of Rome (S.U.R.), Rome 2009, and in “*Theory of the Person and Existential Personalistic Anthropology*”, Published by the Sophia University of Rome (S.U.R.), 2009.

CHAPTER XXXIX

FROM VIOLENCE TO NON-VIOLENCE

Among all the transformations that Ulysses must undergo, there is one in particular that Circe mentions when she is speaking about Scylla:

*I was speaking so, and the luminous goddess answered right away:
“**Madman, you always have actions of war in your heart, and battles;**
won’t you give in to the immortal gods?
She (Scylla) is not mortal, she is an immortal plague,
she’s terrible, atrocious, wild, invincible,
there is no protection from her, the best thing you can do is escape.
If you waste time putting on your weapons near the cliff,
I’m afraid she’ll attack you again and she’ll be there
with all her heads, grabbing a companion for each.
It would be much better to escape and ask Cratais, Scylla’s mother,
for help, since she generated this calamity for mortals;
she can stop her, so she doesn’t attack again (Od. XII, 115-126).*

Who is this Scylla that cannot be stopped?

And how great is our folly that, like Ulysses, we always carry **actions of war** in our hearts and minds?

Gandhi thought up a great way to combat the arrogance of the British Empire but he did so with method and discipline and above all with art, following truth, humility, love and nonviolence. Gandhi was not a Buddhist, he was an enlightened Hindu and a great artist of life.

I ask myself, though; what would have happened to India if Gandhi had only worried about reaching enlightenment?

We are in need of Ulysses, who learns to transform himself and free himself of his hybris and violence. We also need Gandhi, to learn how to fight our battles in an artistic way and not a violent way. (see *the Acts of the Congress of the Sophia University of Rome in Martina Franca: “Da Cristo a Gandhi”* {From Christ to Gandhi}, published by Giuseppe Coschignano).

We need to learn how to make truth emerge from our lies and how to be violent with our *Psychological I* so we are not violent with ourselves and with others.

This is the only way that our *I Person* can emerge from deep within us, and become artists of our lives and of the life of the universe.

After many woes, Ulysses transforms himself from being a warrior to becoming an artist: an artist of himself and an artist who knows how to help Telemachus and Penelope grow up and become adults so they can abandon the devouring mother and learn how to create *concordance* and circular love amongst themselves.

When Penelope does not want to recognize Ulysses, even after he passes the test of the bow and arrow and after the Suitors have been massacred, Ulysses does not respond with violence. He is patient, welcoming and available, he is humble and he goes along with his wife who first rejects him and puts him to the test with the story of their nuptial bed.

This is how Homer describes this crucial moment:

*He emerged from the bathroom looking like an immortal god;
and he again sat on the chair he had gotten up from,
facing his wife, and he said to her:
“My dear, among all women the gods who dwell on Olympus
made your heart the hardest of them all;
not even a woman whose **heart is so stubborn**
could stay away from a man who, after suffering so much,
returns after twenty years to the land of his forefathers.
But come, nurse, make my bed; I will sleep alone
if necessary: this woman’s **heart is made of iron**”.*
(Od. XXIII, 163-172)

Ulysses forcefully, but patiently, reprimands his wife for having a hard, stubborn heart made of iron, but there is no violence in his words nor in his actions. He is willing to wait some more and go to bed by himself.

Penelope answers him by defending herself, but she does not budge from her hard-heartedness. She is still not satisfied with the tests she has already put Ulysses through, first when he came to her as a beggar, and later when he had to string the bow like no one else and when he killed the more than one hundred Suitors; she gives him another one.

*And the prudent Penelope spoke to him:
“My dear, no, I am not arrogant, I don’t despise you,
nor am I surprised: I know exactly how you were
when you left Ithaca on your ships with long oars.
Yes, make him a soft bed, Eurycleia,
outside my room, that he made with his own hands;
make him a soft bed here, and throw a cover on it,
and sheep skins and capes and splendid curtains”.*

*She spoke thus, **putting her husband to the test**; and at this Odysseys
disgusted turned to his faithful woman:
“Oh woman, the words you have spoken are truly painful!
Who has moved my bed? even an expert would have had
difficulty, unless a god himself had come,
and had easily moved it.
Among men there would be no one alive, not even in full strength,*

*who could move it easily, because there is a great secret
 in the well-made bed that I made, and no one else.
 There was a trunk of an olive tree within the courtyard, full of
 florid, lush branches; it was as large as a pillar:
 I built the walls of the room around this, and finished them
 with small stones, and I covered it over well,
 put strong doors on it, firmly locked.
 And then I cut off the top of the leafy olive tree,
 and I trimmed down the trunk, I well encased it with bronze
 artfully, I made sure it was level,
 I built a base for it and used the drill to secure it.
 This is how I started in building the bed, and finished it
 with gold, silver and ivory decorations.
 Lastly, I pulled the leather bands, resplendent with Tyrian Purple.
 There, this is the secret: and I don't know,
 woman, if my bed is still intact, or if by now
 someone has moved it by sawing through the base of the olive trunk".
 (Od. XXIII, 173-204)*

Finally Penelope softens, she starts to cry and, throwing her arms around his neck, she tenderly kisses him.

*He spoke thus, and suddenly her heart and her knees were softened,
 because she had received the sure sign that it was Odysseus;
 and she ran straight to him, crying, she threw
 her arms around Odysseus' neck, she kissed him on the head and said:
 "Don't get angry with me, Odysseus, you who have always been
 the wisest among men; the gods filled us with tears,
 the gods, envied that together we could enjoy
 our youth and reach old age happily.
 So now, don't be angry with me, don't be disgusted,
 that I did not hug you immediately, as soon as I saw you. (Od. XXIII, 205-214)*

We now know that Ulysses has been transformed. He no longer has "thoughts of war" in his heart, as the goddess Circe had told him earlier on.

After having lived through so many transformations, Athena was right in telling Ulysses: You have in your heart "**wise plans**" (Od. XXIII, 46). Only with the help of his wise plans can he transform his wife.

When faced with women's coldness and stubbornness, how many men cultivate wise plans in their hearts to transform their wives, instead of beating them, or killing them or abandoning them for another woman?

If today there are no men who are capable of acting like Ulysses, we must not lose hope that they can still learn how to do it, inspired by the mythical figure of Ulysses.

CHAPTER XL

ULYSSES AND PENELOPE

In all of Greek literature, there is no other woman who loves to be courted by many men like Penelope does, nor is there another woman so capable of deceiving all of them and sending them to their sure deaths at the hand of her husband.

At the same time, there is no other woman who allows her courtiers to camp out in her house and dilapidate her wealth.

Penelope herself says this in book XX:

*Suitors had never done something like this before,
when asking for the hand of a noblewoman
daughter of a rich man, competing among themselves for her:
they themselves would bring their own oxen and fat sheep, lunch
for the family of the young woman being courted, splendid gifts they would bring:
and not devour her wealth without shame" (Od. XX, 275-280).*

But why wait so long to say so and, especially, why did she allow them to come into her home and act as though they were the masters of it?

What other woman exists who is so astute she is able to delegate the plan to kill her husband Ulysses and her son Telemachus to the Suitors, without getting her own hands dirty, like Clytemnestra had done when she had Agamemnon killed?

Once he had seen with his own eyes the reality of this double plan to get revenge, Ulysses would have had every right in the world to feel mortally offended and to decide to massacre not only the Suitors but also Penelope.

And, in fact, there are versions of the myth in which Ulysses exterminates everyone, Penelope included.

How could we possibly think that Ulysses' heart broke to see how his female servants were betraying him and it did not when he saw how Penelope was faithful to him in one way and had betrayed him in another?

Homer did not include these other versions in his poem; he made up another one, in which Ulysses forgives Penelope and kills only the Suitors and all the maidservants who had gone to bed with them.

Homer's greatness can be seen in how he managed to find a solution in which Ulysses forgives Penelope, but he does not forgive her all her arrogant demands, represented symbolically by the Suitors and the unfaithful maidservants, and so he mercilessly kills them.

Immense courage and great inner strength are necessary to carry out a plan like this.

It takes great art to think it up and an even greater art for the one who must carry it out in reality.

Where can we find, today, a man who is capable of exterminating all of his woman's arrogant demands as well as his own, in one single stroke, without killing her, or abandoning her, or detaching from her by first separating and then getting divorced?

And how can a man be expected to love a woman when he knows she is an assassin? Knowing that she is plotting to kill him?

This is an immensely difficult task, one that seems impossible. It can become possible only if one embraces a concept of love that is not a *sentiment* (and worse yet a romantic one) nor simply passion, but is based on a *decision*.

To learn more about love as a decision I suggest reading the Cosmo-Artistic interpretation of the film "Iris" by A. Grimaldi, written by Vito Chialastri and published in "I Laboratori Corali di Cosmo-Art" {The Cosmo-Art Group Laboratories}.

If one has made the *decision* to love a woman, this love can be brought to the highest level, like giving one's very life for the woman one loves. Only a love that is this great can obtain a woman's complete transformation.

Ulysses most certainly made this decision when he was on Calypso's island and when he decided to leave her, facing the open sea on a very simple raft.

It's true that Ulysses was capable of transforming Circe and Calypso into women who became giving and generous.

But what is it that allows him to be certain, or to even have hope, that he will be able to transform Penelope and he'll be able to get her to accept the relationship that he has in mind?

Here, too, Athena must have told him: **You will definitely be able to do it.**

Teiresias had already reassured Ulysses when he told him:

*... you will find trouble in your home,
arrogant men, who are eating up your riches,
and are courting your divine wife while offering her wedding gifts.
But you will punish their violence, when you return. (Od. XI, 115-118).*

Ulysses can have faith in himself because he has already had to face death many times and he won. He will win this time as well.

History and the news tell a different story: men get revenge by killing their wives or by abandoning them for another. We never hear that a man is capable of getting revenge by destroying the thousands of arrogant demands that possess the woman he loves and that he has chosen as his wife.

If Ulysses is capable of making this type of decision, to forgive on one hand and get revenge on the other, by saving Penelope while exterminating the Suitors and the unfaithful maidservants, this is possible only because he has in mind the difficult project of creating *secondary beauty* by transforming himself and transforming Penelope, as I have tried to demonstrate in this book and in others before this.

Athena herself says this, when Ulysses expresses doubt that he'll be able to kill the Suitors, who are many, all by himself. You have "*wise plans*" in your heart (Od. XXII, 46); you will always have my help. **You will definitely be able to do it.**

Even his mother Anticlea reassures him:

*And so I asked, and my sovereign mother answered right away:
"Oh no! her heart has remained constant
in your house; and the days and nights
that she spends crying are always so sad.
No one has your privilege: (Od. XI, 180-184)*

We can only imagine how much violence Ulysses feels and how, instead of pulling out his sword to kill Penelope, he tells his heart to be still and to remain steadfast in his project to love Penelope and create beauty with her. This can be done only when love is a decision and not when love is a sentiment.

Killing is so easy. Everyone knows how to do it, either with a sword or with words.

It is difficult to decide to love a woman who can become an assassin and hope to transform her into a woman who knows how to love her man.

It is an easy task for Ulysses to shoot an arrow through the rings of twelve axes set up in a row.

It is much more difficult to teach a woman to give up her arrogance and her demanding nature and learn how to give herself to her man with love.

It is much more difficult to know how to teach a woman to not want to always impose her will and her power on the man she professes to love.

All these are things that Ulysses learned how to do by going through thousands of misadventures and thousands of painful experiences.

This is what being a man means.

This is what being an artist of one's own life and of the life of the universe means.

Athena's words "**You will definitely be able to do it.**" run frequently through Ulysses' mind.

This is where he gets his great strength and the great faith that allows him to stick to his goal.

This crucial theme of how to transform a woman-assassin into a woman capable of loving returns in Puccini's famous Opera "Turandot", where the prince Calaf succeeds in transforming the ice-cold princess Turandot, who kills all those who ask her to marry them, and gets her to fall in love with him. But a high test of love was necessary for this to happen. One is when Liu accepts to die out of love for the prince and the other is when Calaf risks his life by giving Turandot the answer to the enigma which she was unable to find. Ulysses, too, risks his life for the love of Penelope by undertaking the terrible battle against the Suitors.

Most certainly, Penelope was a woman of power and she demonstrates this in several ways, including in how she deceives the Suitors by weaving her shroud by day and unraveling it by night and how she refuses to recognize Ulysses even after he has managed to exterminate the Suitors.

Ulysses knows that a man has two ways he can form a couple relationship with a woman: either he can become submissive to her, and this is what Laertes does with Anticlea (otherwise why would he leave the palace and go cultivate the fields?), or he can force the woman to become submissive to him. This second way is what Hermes teaches Ulysses when he tells him, shortly before he arrives before Circe, to take out his sword and threaten to kill her. At that point, Circe tells him to get into her bed, and Ulysses, having eaten the "moly" herb that Hermes gave him (and we will never know exactly what herb this was) and that renders Circe's magic spells innocuous, has her make a solemn oath that she will never do any harm to either him or to his companions.

Unfortunately, when Ulysses reaches the island of Calypso Hermes is not there to give him the herb again and Ulysses winds up falling under Calypso's influence for a long time.

This time Hermes comes at the end of seven long years and helps free Ulysses not with the power of the "moly" herb but with the strength of Zeus' will. It is clear, however, that both strength (and not violence) and love are necessary to turn around his being submissive to a woman. But at what price!

Strength is not violence, it is a power that one acquires after living for a long time and after elaborating one's powerlessness so it can be transformed into personal power. Ulysses acquires strength in regards to Penelope, because he went through many experiences of being powerless while he wandered throughout the Mediterranean and, especially, because when he walks into his palace as a beggar he must call upon his great inner strength to endure the Suitor's violence (which is nothing but Penelope's own violence acted out by the Suitors).

By accepting this violence (so as to create a new relationship) he is invigorated and, by unifying the strength he has gained from learning how to find his own center (the bow and arrow) with the strength of his heart, he becomes capable of turning the situation around and of stopping Penelope's violence once and for all.

Powerful women are like a wild horse that no human will can ever tame and ride.

In his penetrating film "*The horse-whisperer*", Robert Redford knows how to use together strength, softness and respect to tame a horse (see. A.M. et al : "*I Laboratori Corali della Cosmo-art*" {The Cosmo-Art Group Laboratories}).

Men who want to create a couple relationship can learn a lot from this film, if they are unable to learn from Ulysses.

The "moly" herb can be extracted from the earth only with the strength of a god. There is no need to know exactly what this herb was that could cancel the power of the sorceress Circe's spells.

It is enough to concentrate on the concept of "strength" and we are certainly not talking about physical strength.

The hero in the film "Star Wars" is constantly invited to use *the force* and not hatred, if he wants to win over evil and over those who express it. He must do the same thing if he wants to lift a space ship out of the swamp it is mired in.

We are not talking here of physical strength, we are talking about the kind of strength that one acquires after having lived a long time and having transformed many situations in which they were completely powerless.

To be able to accept total powerlessness and transform it into personal power (an acceptance of powerlessness is a form of great power) is the highest form of strength that a man can reach.

Women can't be beaten in the art of putting men into situations of complete powerlessness and total exasperation.

The fact that men know how to respond to this only with hatred and rebellion is a real problem.

Hatred and rebellion can only generate death for oneself and for others.

The more hatred accumulates the more one becomes an assassin.

Ulysses does not want to follow this course.

Being constantly guided by his *SELF* (Athena) and by his inner wisdom, he wants to create a relationship in which the two partners can form *one soul* that lives in *concordance*, without one having to succumb to the other. This is an acquired ability to create *secondary beauty*, or immortal beauty.

This is a new relationship model that is the result of a fusion between cosmic forces and human forces. Ulysses is its fundamental archetype.

Sometimes I think of the woman as being like an ovum that does not allow any sperm to penetrate it and I think of the man as being like a sperm that doesn't have much desire to fight, so he lets himself die, powerless, below the stone walls of the woman's heart.

To conquer a woman's attentions is easy.

To conquer the heart of a woman is a very difficult task and very few choose to face it.

Every time I have a conflict with my wife, the first question I ask myself is, which of my arrogant demands must I give up? And I realize that my list of demands is very long indeed.

I won't, like Ulysses, be able to exterminate them all at one time, but maybe I will be able to get rid of them one by one.

It is much harder to bend my pride and respond with *loving strength* to any violence I am attacked with. Little by little I can learn this, especially when I can identify and free myself of my unconscious will to be a martyr and to allow myself to be eaten by the lions, like the Christians did in the Circus Maximus or in the Colosseum so they could then be proud of it.

Loving strength is a synthesis of two opposites: love and hate. To be able to develop it, one must do much more than just give up the unconscious desire to be a martyr. It is necessary to be able to learn how to reorganize hatred and strip it of its destructive-destructive aims; after this happens, it is possible to accept hatred as a destructive-constructive force and become strong in one's desire to learn how to use it, when necessary, together with the ability to love and to love oneself. If love and hate stay separate from each other, it ends up that love alone is powerless and ineffective and hatred is only destructive. Under such conditions it is impossible to change oneself and it is impossible to transform a woman and especially impossible to change a mother.

Accepting hatred as a destructive-constructive force means feeling like an assassin when we must use it, and being overtaken by infinite feelings of guilt for doing evil instead of good. If we accept our guilty feelings and allow them to govern us, we will remain prisoners of a false ideal of perfection and of a false type of goodness.

Gandhi said; *it makes no sense that a mouse forgive a cat if it doesn't first become a cat*. In the relationship with a phallic, tyrannical mother, it makes no sense to learn how to forgive her unless we don't first become capable of killing her phallic, tyrannical components.

I saw these themes be very nicely explored in the shocking thriller by Michael Mann entitled "Collateral", with Tom Cruise.

It is not enough to see it just once to be able to grasp all the nuances. This film was chosen as a theme for one of the Cosmo-Art Laboratories of the Sophia University of Rome (S.U.R.).

The Suitors don't represent just the thousands of demands of an arrogant heart, they also represent the devouring mother, the phallic mother and the tyrannical mother-assassin. They also represent Ulysses' and Penelope's homicidal and suicidal urges. It is necessary to identify with their homicidal urges to be able to kill off one's own homicidal and suicidal urges. This is what having to kill the Suitors means: it is an act of justice and of transformation, not an act of revenge.

The stars create their own strength by making a synthesis between two identical atoms; human beings create their strength by making a synthesis between two elements that are completely opposite. The first is a work of art of nature, the second is a work of art done by human beings and it is much more difficult to accomplish.

Loving strength is indispensable for creating *concordance*, and the *concordance* that is created this way can be discontinuous. This doesn't matter. It is a long process, just like the birth of a star is a long process.

Every time a moment of *concordance* is reached it is a Himalayan peak that has been climbed, in the name of the beauty that can be created and not in the name of ugliness.

CHAPTER XLI

CONCORDANCE AND IMMORTALITY

“The goal is invisible until it has been reached”

*“But the two when they had enjoyed their sweet love
enjoyed talking to each other she saying
how much she had suffered at home, a beautiful woman
forced to watch while the impudent crowd of suitors
slaughtered many cows and fat sheep because of her
and much wine they took from the vases
and the divine Odysseus saying how much pain he inflicted
on his enemies and how many misadventures he too had to face
he told her everything and she enjoyed listening nor sleep
fell upon them until after they had told each other everything”.
(Od. XXIII, 300-309)*

“Until they had told each other everything”

We must reflect on this phrase and grasp all the implications it contains. Homer says that Ulysses tells Penelope all about his misadventures and thus he tells her about his encounters with Circe and with Calypso.

Ulysses doesn't lie, like he is used to always doing, nor does he hide his experiences with love and sex when he is far away from his wife.

And this happens right after Penelope recognized her husband, after all her resistance was overcome, and they went to bed and enjoyed sweet love.

What other man would have told his wife about his adventures with other women, the first night that he has returned, trusting that he would be understood and welcomed? And what wife wouldn't have reacted with disgust, offended by her husband's unfaithfulness?

What wife would not have thrown her husband out of bed and closed herself in her rancor forever?

And yet this does not happen. Ulysses does not blame Penelope for having allowed one hundred eighty suitors into his house that were plotting to kill him as soon as he returned, and Penelope does not blame Ulysses for having stayed for a year in Circe's bed and for seven years in Calypso's.

Ulysses understands and forgives his wife for her errors and Penelope understands and forgives her husband for his.

In this comprehension and reciprocal forgiveness lies the highest test that Ulysses and Penelope manage to pass in this moment of their being “one soul”. According to Homer, it is the highest level that the man-woman couple can reach.

This is what Ulysses had expressed as his most sincere wish for Nausicaa, when he is begging her to help him after his terrible shipwreck. He wishes her the highest form of happiness that is possible in an encounter between a man and a woman.

Ulysses says that a couple that reaches this type of *concordance* becomes “well renowned”, they create joy for their friends and while their enemies become angry.

How can Ulysses make these affirmations?

From whom did he learn them?

But above all, how did Ulysses know ahead of time, especially when he had to tell Calypso that he didn't want to marry her and would not accept the gift of immortality that she promised him, that Penelope would agree with him and want to build the same type of relationship that Ulysses has in mind?

Ever since he had descended in Hades and met Agamemnon, he knows that many women are treacherous assassins. How can he be sure that Penelope is not one of these?

How can he be sure that Penelope isn't plotting to have him killed as soon as he gets to Ithaca, as Clytemnestra did?

He must have had some major doubts, since when he landed at Ithaca and met Athena he knew that there were more than a hundred Suitors in his house ready to kill him. Otherwise, why would he have decided to show up disguised as a beggar, so no one would recognize him, not even Penelope?

*“Ah, just like Agamemnon Atrides
I would have reached a miserable end in my own palace,
if you, oh goddess, had not told me clearly every thing.
Go on, you plan how I can get revenge,
and stay near me, inspiring me with brave strength,
(Od. XIII, 383-387)*

The story of the great love between Orpheus and Eurydice was passed down to us from Greek mythology, but this relationship did not last long. Death comes and destroys her. Orpheus obtains the ability to descend into Hades and bring Eurydice back to life. But Orpheus does not respect the conditions that Proserpine had set for him; he turns around to make sure his woman is following him out of Hades, and he loses her forever.

Ulysses has in mind a different kind of relationship. He is thinking about a relationship that can create *secondary beauty*, as described by Cosmo-Art. This beauty assures that the man and the woman will have immortal life, a type of immortal life that is superior to the kind that even the gods have. Otherwise, we could not explain

why Ulysses rejects the immortality offered to him by Circe and Calypso if only he will marry them and abandon Penelope.

From the beginning, Ulysses pursues the realization of a relationship that itself creates immortality, without it having to be given from anyone else.

This is why he accepts all the thousands of woes that life inflicts on him without becoming a victim. He accepts everything so he can transform his life into a work of art.

This is why he accepts the most difficult thing that a man can face, the complete conquering of his pride, and going to his own house dressed in the rags of a beggar, instead of as the king he is.

This is why he accepts to withstand all the humiliations that the Suitors make him go through.

This is why he accepts to fight a huge battle and kill them all, with the help of Athena, Telemachus, Eumeus the swineherd and Philoetius the cowherd.

To kill the Suitors, to eliminate all of them without saving any one of them for me is a task that a man and a woman must be willing to accept. If both of them do not radically put aside their own arrogant demands, it is impossible to build a couple that can live in *concordance*, that can resist the test of time and that can create a beauty that renders them immortal.

Among the most difficult arrogant demands that must be eradicated are the ones that make us want to create a couple relationship without giving up our incestuous ties with our devouring mother.

The Suitors are arrogant and proud and they devour all the riches from Ulysses' house. They are the last powerful symbol of a mother who devours the life of both Ulysses and Penelope.

They are not like the monsters that Ulysses has already met, Polyphemus, the Sirens, Scylla and Charybdis. They are human beings, just like the arrogant demands that dwell in the hearts of men and women are human.

They represent the *fetal I* who imposes its will as though it were an absolute, completely invading the space that should belong to the *adult I*.

Rabbi Jochanan, as quoted by Paul Watzlawick in *"The Situation is Hopeless but not Serious: the Pursuit of Unhappiness"*, says: "To be able to make a harmonious couple is more difficult than the miracle Moses performed at the Red Sea". What this Rabbi says is truer today than ever, but Homer and Cosmo-Art make a proposal and indicate a path for its accomplishment, in the hopes that there are couples who want to listen deeply to their desire for beauty and immortality.

What type of immortality are we talking about? When Ulysses rejects the offers Circe and Calypso make him, and having had this offer twice is very important in completely understanding Homer's thought, we know that the gods' so-called immortality is unreal. It simply does not exist, even though the Greeks need to be able to believe that divine immortality does exist.

And since Ulysses tells Calypso that he is ready to face yet more suffering just so he can reach Penelope, we must deduce that Ulysses does not intend on giving up immortality in exchange for his return to Ithaca, but that he has his own plan in mind: a way he can reach his own immortality which is superior to the type promised him by Calypso.

It is true that in the verses where *concordance* is mentioned (*Od. VI, 180-185*), Homer and Ulysses speak of being “well renowned” as a result of the *glorious concordance*, and not of immortality, but this must not deceive us. Homer must make sure his readers will accept his ideas and thus he cannot openly propose a type of immortality that is superior to that of the gods; had he done so he probably would have been lynched. But since Ulysses compares his relationship with Penelope to his relationships with Circe and Calypso, who are “sovereign goddesses”, and he rejects their promise of immortality, for me it’s clear that Homer and Ulysses are indicating, when speaking of being “well renowned”, a type of immortality that is most certainly real and is most certainly superior to the type that the gods have.

One last argument for this is as follows: why is it that Homer defines *concordance* as being “**glorious**”? The Greeks used the term glorious only when referring to their war heroes and their immortal fame and never when referring to concordance between husband and wife. Nevertheless, when Ulysses descends into Hades and speaks with Achilles, the most glorious hero of those times, Homer tells us that Achilles prefers even the most humble life of a country bumpkin over the glory given by dying in battle:

*“Don’t honor my death, splendid Odysseus.
I would rather be a country bumpkin, serve a master,
one with no inheritance, no wealth,
than rule over all these worn-out shadows. (Od. XI, 488-491)*

Clearly Homer is proposing a path towards immortality that is superior to any other type of immortality that humanity has ever invented before. This is why he calls it “glorious”.

CHAPTER XLII

MORE ON THE STORY OF THE ODYSSEY THAT ULYSSES TELLS PENELOPE

We have already written that, since the world began it had never happened that during a first night of love after twenty years of absence, a husband had told his wife about not only all his travel adventures, but also his adventures with other women, without having his wife, indignant and offended, throw him out of bed.

If this happens, if Ulysses is able to tell Penelope about all his experiences with other women without getting a strong reaction, there must be a very significant reason that this is so.

I believe the reason can be found in the decision to not only reciprocally forgive each other for all their wrongs, but also to step completely from a dimension of guilt to one of giving, where everything is a gift and there are no more debts nor debtors.

This can be accomplished only if both people involved are strongly determined to create beauty and not ugliness, beyond finding again their *concordance*, which is the goal of the *Cosmic SELF*.

If a husband and wife have decided to make the creation of beauty their main goal, then everything that can happen to one or the other is put into a cosmic context where guilt, which does exist, can be overcome, and creative energy can even be extracted from it so as to create new beauty.

Secondary beauty is the result of a synthesis of many different types of energies, not just one. The energy that can be extracted from guilt that has been owned and overcome is among the most potent energies that can converge in creating the impossible, *secondary beauty*, where everything is a gift and there are no more debts or debtors.

It is true that Ulysses betrayed Penelope with Circe and Calypso, but how would he have been able to free himself of his intrauterine incest with his mother, had he not established intimate relationships through which he could understand and overcome these incestuous ties? How else could he decide to detach himself from his mother without first possessing her? Circe and Calypso are two symbols of the mother that first possesses her son and then is possessed by him.

It is true that Penelope was insane in allowing one hundred eight prideful suitors, who plot the deaths of Telemachus and Ulysses, into her house. But how would she have otherwise been able to become aware of her infinite arrogant demands, those of a woman who is still a child and who is still deeply tied to her mother, with whom she plots Ulysses' death so she can stay a child forever, forever bound in a couple relationship with her mother?

And, without the Suitors, how could she ever have understood how much she, as well as Ulysses, was possessed by a devouring mother that had control over her life?

When one maintains a deep complicity with the mother, it destroys the foundations of the goal of two partners to create a couple. It is especially damaging when the two have decided to pursue the goal of creating “one soul” that is the result of having placed one’s life at the service of a cosmic plan to create *secondary beauty* through the fusion of the *I* and the *You* of a man and a woman.

CHAPTER XLIII

COMPLICITY AND ARROGANT DEMANDS

We must face a terrifying battle when attempting to overcome our complicity with the mother and the thousands of arrogant demands we have towards others and towards life. It is equally very difficult to step away from the ambiguity that we get stuck in when we want everything and we are unwilling to let go of anything.

This ambiguity, already mentioned in the dialogue between Athena and Telemachus (see. Od. I, 248-251), is described very well in the dream that Penelope tells Ulysses about.

*Come on, now, listen to me and explain my dream:
twenty geese are here in the house picking at grain,
while they are coming out of the water, and I am having fun watching them.
A large eagle plunges down from the mountain, its beak open,
and breaks all their necks and kills them; they all lay on their backs
in the house, in a pile; then the eagle flies back up into the luminous sky.
And I was sobbing and crying in the dream,
and my maidservants came to hug me,
because I was so distraught that the eagle had killed my geese.
(Od. XIX, 535-543)*

In the explanation that Ulysses offers Penelope, the geese that are eating the grain represent the Suitors who are camping out in the palace and this reveals how much fun Penelope has had in being courted and desired by so many men.

The eagle that kills the geese represents Ulysses who kills the Suitors, and Penelope is sad because he has killed them. It is obvious that Penelope does not want to abandon her childhood dimension and does not want to decide yet to detach herself completely from her mother, thus becoming a woman who is able to love a man.

This same ambiguity belongs to Ulysses as well, and this is obvious in his relationship with Calypso.

In Penelope's dream we can see the various components of the *I*, the *I Person*, the *Personal SELF*, the *Cosmic SELF*, the *Psychological I*, the *fetal I* and the *adult I*, that all act in contrast to each other.

Paola Sensini Mercurio used this dream to create a method of dream interpretation that follows the principles of Cosmo-Artistic Anthropology.

It is important to reflect on the various types of pain that Ulysses must face so he can discover the devouring mother that hides within himself, within his very house, so he can free himself of it.

We must reflect on the pain of having to experience complete powerlessness before he can gain the power to gain victory over and destroy the devouring mother.

Homer many times calls Ulysses "*patient Ulysses*", one who is patient while attempting to conquer evil and who is patient while extracting beauty from ugliness.

The alchemists were infinitely patient when working on their opus, their developing the ability to extract gold from lead.

The Suitors don't only represent the devouring mother, they also represent "the evil" that is within all of us and that is in the world. The Suitors are assassins, because they are plotting to kill Ulysses and to kill Telemachus; they are thieves because they want to possess Penelope and all of Ulysses' riches.

They represent the "homicidal urges" and the "suicidal urges" that can be found in every human heart.

The Suitors are full of arrogant demands, greed, envy and hybris and that is why they must be destroyed, but only by using infinite patience to get to the right moment, with the help of Athena and Zeus.

It is important to reflect on the infinite types of complicity that exist between a child who has been devoured and the devouring mother. It is not possible to acquire a real ability to free oneself from the mother's destructiveness until after one has lived through and dissolved all of these types of complicity with which the child remains tied to the devouring mother.

The son or daughter always feels a secret pleasure alongside their pain for being devoured and chopped to pieces.

There is pleasure in feeling alive between the fangs of the monster. There is the pleasure of masochistic suffering and in learning how to use sadistic pleasure against the mother and against anyone who is a good target for maternal projections.

There is the pleasure of feeling the type of security that comes from the mother's affection while she is nourishing you, while waiting to herself be fed a much larger meal later on.

There is the pleasure of identifying with the omnipotence of the mother to guarantee one's own possibility to be omnipotent.

I didn't have to go wandering through the Mediterranean to be able to experience, in my daily life, the possibility to re-experience all the stages of powerlessness described above. I am convinced that from the moment I was conceived I felt the pain of being chopped to pieces by the devouring mother.

I also faced my arrogant demands, my complicities and my ambiguities and it was not easy to recognize them and decide to abandon them all, one by one.

I was never without the help offered me by my *SELF* and I always managed to listen to its wise council even when it seemed absurd.

It is also important to reflect on how in passing gradually from powerlessness to personal power Ulysses manages to acquire the precious ability to transform the devouring mother into a positive one.

This happens with the sorceress Circe, who teaches Ulysses what he needs to know so he can face the dangers he will encounter ahead.

Circe knows the way to descend into Hades, the kingdom of the dead, and teaches him how to do so even though he is alive. There he meets the soothsayer Teiresias, who knows the future, and thus can tell Ulysses how he can ultimately resolve his conflict with Poseidon, or in other words his problem with his guilt and with feeling guilty.

Ulysses also transforms the nymph Calypso into a positive mother figure that is finally capable of giving him his freedom. She also teaches Ulysses how to navigate by night by using the stars as his guide. (see A.M. The Ulysseans, Chapter XV, Published by the Sophia University of Rome (S.U.R.), 2009).

I would like to look at one more encounter with the devouring mother.

This happens when Ulysses must pass alongside the vortex of Charybdis after he has been shipwrecked and lost his ship and all his companions, due to a storm that Zeus struck up while they were off the coast of the island of Thrinacia.

It is apparently very odd that the marine currents drag Ulysses back to where Charybdis is, after he has managed to skirt around it when he passed the Strait of Messina the first time. But evidently, Homer is trying to tell us something else of great importance.

This time Ulysses is saved thanks to a fig tree (see Chapter 45), which he grabs on to so he is not sucked down into the vortex.

CHAPTER XLIV

ULYSSES AND POSEIDON

Homer tells us that Poseidon is mad at Ulysses because he blinded Polyphemus, who is Poseidon's son.

But here we must necessarily ask a question: doesn't the principle of legitimate self-defense apply to Ulysses as well as to others?

Was Ulysses supposed to let himself and his companions be devoured by Polyphemus, without doing anything to defend himself?

Then another question comes to mind: is Poseidon a divinity who acts irrationally, just as every mother does when her child is threatened after having committed a crime?

Is the child always right and does the mother always take his or her side, no matter what they have done?

When I think of Poseidon and of his hostility towards Ulysses, I think of a god who is obtuse, unfair and domineering.

And when I think of Teireisias saying that the god is right in making Ulysses go through yet another trial so he can find a way to make up with him, my stomach turns.

When I think of Poseidon I think of all the forms of obtuseness, unfairness and domination that can damage everyone's life, including mine.

I think of the obtuseness of the judges who condemn Socrates to death with the accusation that he has corrupted the young people of the city. I think of all those times that the innocent are persecuted and the guilty are freed because of a legal loophole.

I think of the obtuseness of many doctors who rarely listen to their patients and base their decisions on what they have in their own heads, based on their own limited knowledge.

I think of the obtuseness of public institutions and of the arrogance of civil servants who force poor citizens to make a journey even more exhausting than Ulysses' every time they try to solve a problem that has befallen them.

I think of the obtuseness of many wives who blame all their troubles on their husbands, and vice versa, and never look at their own responsibility. And I think of those people who only see other people's faults and errors and who never see their own, even when they are glaringly obvious.

These and many other things are what Homer is talking about when he includes Poseidon's hostility towards Ulysses in his poem.

And Teireisias wanted to tell Ulysses that when he is dealing with obtuseness, unfairness and attempts to dominate, he must not act "*with thoughts of war*" but with humility and extreme patience. My stomach turns over because I want nothing to do with having to put aside my pride, nor do I want to acquire humility and patience; rather I am always cultivating, as Circe says to Ulysses, "*thoughts of war*".

Zeus knows that Poseidon has no reason to treat Ulysses that way but up until a certain point he respects Poseidon's hostility. But then, when according to his own wisdom it is only right that Ulysses returns to Ithaca, he intervenes with his power and Poseidon can no longer have his way.

He can let his anger loose by starting up a furious storm against Ulysses, but he can not kill him as he did with Ajax.

The strange thing is, though, that Poseidon stirs up a storm against Ulysses only once, and, coincidentally, this happens when Ulysses is on his raft off the island of the Phaeacians. These people, although they are devoted to Poseidon, are the ones that end up taking Ulysses home to Ithaca on their fastest ship.

How can Poseidon punish the Phaeacians only after they have taken Ulysses to Ithaca, and not before?

And just as he threw a cliff at the island of the Phaeacians to destroy it, couldn't he also have thrown it at Ulysses and Ithaca and thus have gotten rid of both of them?

I have already touched on this theme but I keep coming back to it because I feel that these apparent incongruities are hiding some deeper truths that are important to bring to the surface.

Earlier on I wrote that Ulysses' true guilt does not consist of having blinded Polyphemus, it consists instead of his hybris and his arrogance with which he insults him after he has managed to escape. Hybris always results in punishment.

When Ulysses kills the Suitors he no longer has the same hybris and he says that it is sacrilegious to exult over the death of one's enemies.

*"Enjoy this in your heart, old woman, but hold your tongue, don't exult:
it is not pious to gloat over the death of men.
The Fates of the gods and their evil ways brought them to their end;
because none of them knew how to honor other men,
whether they be sad, or good, no matter who came amongst them:
thus, it is due to their prideful madness that they found a brutal ending.
(Od. XXII, 411-416)*

I also wrote earlier that Polyphemus represents the maternal dimension. According to mothers, when their children want to free themselves of the maternal dimension and pass on to the paternal one, their children are guilty of a wrong and must necessarily be punished.

One of the principal characteristics of Ulysses lies exactly in how courageous he is in facing all the trauma connected to his dependence on and complicity with the mother, and for his decision to want to fully enter into the paternal dimension.

This courage requires a decision to challenge maternal power and all of the death threats that pertain to it. It also requires that he pay the price of this difficult task.

In the end, the mother must face her own existential lies and she must recognize that the father's power exists just as much as hers does. She must recognize that the Cosmos too has power as well as and its own goals, and these goals do not coincide at all with the maternal expectation that the child exist only to satisfy the mother's needs.

Poseidon makes this transformational journey and this is why he no longer interferes so much with Ulysses. To the contrary, when he strikes out at him, his attack makes it possible for Ulysses to reach the island of Phaeacians, a people that are his direct descendants and that will help Ulysses reach the goal that until that point was impossible for Ulysses to reach.

It is incorrect what Teiresias tells Ulysses, in the story that Ulysses shares with the Phaeacians,

*"You look for a sweet and easy return, excellent Odysseus,
but a god will make it difficult; I don't believe
that you will be able to escape from the Enosichthon, he hates you so,
he's irate because you blinded his son;
but even so, even though you'll suffer, you'll get there...
(Od. XI, 100-104)*

It is incorrect to think that Ulysses has been wandering the Mediterranean for ten years because of Poseidon's hostility.

Poseidon interferes only once and no more than that to try to keep Ulysses from returning home.

Thus if Ulysses must face thousands of obstacles and thousands of woes to be able to return to his homeland, this is not because he has a god against him. It is because Ulysses is on a journey of transformation that he must go through so he can reach his destination as a new man, a man who has become an artist of his own life and of the life of the universe, step by step.

Also, another problem is not easy to solve. Ulysses descends into Hades, with the help of the Sorceress Circe, and encounters there Teireisias, who predicts for him what the final solution to his conflict with Poseidon must be.

*And when you will have done away with the suitors in your home,
either through deceit or with your sharp bronze sword,
after you will leave, taking hold of your well-made oars,*

*until you come to a people who knows not the sea,
they don't eat food flavoured with salt,
they've never seen ships with minium on their hulls,
nor well-made oars that are like a ships' wings.
And I will tell you the sign, you can't mistake it.
When another traveller meets up with you and tells you
that you are carrying a fan on your shoulder,
at that spot plant your well-made oar in the ground,
and offer good sacrifices to sovrein Poseidon
- a ram, a bull and a boar -
then go home and celebrate hecatombs
for the immortal gods who own the vast sky,
to each one in order. Your death will come
at sea, very gentle, you will die
of a happy old age. Around you your people
will be blessed. This truth is what I predict for you"
(Od. XI, 119-137)*

When I read these verses I wonder what it is exactly that Teireisias is trying to tell Ulysses.

Once the Suitors have been massacred, Ulysses must leave again for another long voyage, this time first by sea and then by land. Only if he goes far inland on an unknown continent can he hope to meet someone who is not familiar with salt and with oars. Maybe the Bedouins in the Sahara are unfamiliar with oars and with salt, or perhaps those that live in the steppes around the Gobi desert in China or in Mongolia have had no contact with either of these things.

For people to have no knowledge of oars they must live in a region where there is no sea, but also where there are no rivers or lakes either. Where can such a region be found in the area around Greece?

He must make a long voyage like a long pilgrimage during which he is stripped of everything and where he strips himself completely of himself. In this manner, he can acquire a profound understanding of himself and especially of his unconscious hatred towards the phallic mother (and Poseidon with his trident – a phallus that can devastate you if you are struck with it – represents this better than any other possible thing).

Only after he has learned everything about his hatred can Ulysses be freed of being alienated from his guilt and alienated from himself.

At this point he can decide to completely forgive the phallic mother .

It is not possible to decide to forgive unless one completely puts one's pride aside. Pride is the major cause of all of our problems. One must also put aside the arrogant demand to be an absolute that is recognized by all but that has no need to recognize anyone else, to be able to truly decide to forgive.

This is almost always the position of a child who has been traumatized by his or her mother.

It is an arduous, almost impossible task to accept that the mother has any sort of right to make mistakes, to not know how to love, to not be perfect, and to not deeply hate her for her shortcomings.

When someone wounds us, the only thing that exists is our own pain and our own wound. The pain of anyone else does not exist nor does it have the right to exist.

A long voyage inside ourselves is necessary for us to be able to recognize how false this position is, how much it is based on an absolute lie and how much we ourselves further this lie.

If we don't forgive we cannot free ourselves. Hatred is a much stronger bond than love is. If we don't forgive, we remain prisoners of the past and we continually reproduce it without ever being able to live in the present.

Forgiving and asking for forgiveness are both essential if we want to free ourselves and become peaceful inside. Only after we have done so can we hope to live a "serene old age".

Offer up "good sacrifices" to Poseidon, Teireisias tells Ulysses. Not an animal sacrifice, but a sacrifice of your wounded pride, of the demand to be an absolute that owes no one anything and that must always receive compensation for damages from everyone around, forever.

The sacrifice of the demand that the mother must be perfect and must not be phallic or an assassin and, if she is not perfect, she cannot ever be forgiven.

Ulysses must understand all of this and so do we, because there is no one whose mother has not in some way controlled, wounded, seduced and threatened them with death, from intrauterine life onward.

At the same time, we must understand that there is no one who doesn't love to be seduced, controlled, devoured and used by the mother for her own needs, out of fear of losing their mother's love. Without our mother's love we go into the darkness and we die. We prefer to become slaves rather than die.

After having offered these good sacrifices to Poseidon, he can return home and there

*celebrate hecatombs
for the immortal gods who own the vast sky,
to each one in order
(Od. XI, 132-133)*

This is quite shocking; the problem that Ulysses must solve does not concern just Poseidon, but all the immortal gods.

It's as if hatred towards the devouring mother does not have to do with just Poseidon, but with all the divinities that "own the vast sky".

Hatred is something that breaks apart our inner balance and unsettles us.

It affects all of our inner life as well as the external world that we live within.

If we can recognize our most hidden hatred and decide to free ourselves of it, our inner world can be pacified and so can the whole universe.

Ulysses, and us along with him, must understand yet another very important thing.

What is the passage from barbarianism to civilization?

Barbarianism is always present within each of us, but we each are called to make our own contribution to the evolution of humanity by transforming our own barbarianism into civility.

The important key in this passage is that barbarianism and chaos belong to humanity's primitive history and they also are an essential part of every step humanity takes forward, not just of the beginning.

Because beyond being barbarians, human beings are also capable of transcending themselves and recreating themselves. These abilities are at the basis of humanity's evolutionary and transformative process that takes place over thousands of years.

That the devouring mother exists is a natural fact, just as earthquakes and hurricanes are natural facts.

It wouldn't make sense if we were to hate the earth because there are earthquakes that can swallow hundreds of thousands of human beings in an instant .

That the Cyclops Polyphemus who respects no law exists is a natural fact, just as it is a natural fact that Scylla and Charybdis devour anyone who gets near them.

It's a natural fact that there are Laestrygonians, who are cannibals and who devour the crews from eleven of Ulysses' ships.

It's a natural fact that there are Sirens that first enchant you with their song and afterwards they turn you into a skeleton, rotting under the heat of the sun.

There is no wickedness in these natural facts, just as the larger fish that eat the smaller ones do not act out of wickedness.

There is really no wickedness in the phallic mother, and if we end up caught in her devouring jaws this does not make our destructive reactions and our decision to hate her forever legitimate.

And yet millions of human beings, wounded by the trauma their mothers have inflicted on them, build their whole lives around a need to get revenge that never, ever ends. The *fetal I*, in particular, is the one who never forgets the wrongs inflicted on it and it is the one who never can get revenge enough.

The *fetal I* invades the adult and imprisons it in a spiral of infinite hatred.

Life becomes an inferno this way.

Those who want to get out of this hell must free themselves of their hatred through forgiveness (such as in the wonderful way suggested by Louise Hay) and they must invest all their energies in the transformation of themselves and of the mother.

As Circe says, if Ulysses is only full of thoughts of war, he will never be able to transform either himself or anyone else.

Cosmo-Art suggests that when we are faced with any type of pain we must create a bridge between the present and the past (the Cosmo-Artistic bridge) and discover how the pain we are experiencing in the present is helping pain from the past emerge. From here we can understand that we still have plenty to face with Poseidon and that we must decide to sacrifice our pride and our hatred, our megalomaniac, omnipotent *I*, as well as our *fetal I* that wants nothing to do with detaching from the past or with giving up its thousands of types of complicity with the devouring mother.

This long inner voyage that must be made by both Ulysses and Penelope is described as follows at the end of book XXIII:

*And meanwhile wise Odysseus told his woman:
"Oh woman, we have not yet reached
the end of all our trials yet, I still have many to face,
bitter ones, for a long time, that I must carry out.
This is what the spirit of Teiresias told me
the day I descended into the house of Hades
(Od. XXIII, 247-252)*

What must be faced is an enormous, long, bitter task. It is a "trial" that both Ulysses and Penelope must go through. The term "trial" is found only twice throughout the whole *Odyssey*, once at the beginning of the poem and once at the end of it.

This can help us understand what the best way to read Homer is.

If Ulysses and Penelope often complain about the pain that they must suffer, at the end they stop complaining because they understand that they have been put through a long, interminable trial.

But why is that?

Certainly not because the gods are evil and sadistic, and this is clearly stated in the first verses of the poem.

Nor is it because of Ulysses' and Penelope's being guilty for something. It is because they have the opportunity to complete a project that the gods, or rather the *Cosmic SELF* and *Life*, truly care about:

the project to create *secondary beauty* that is the only thing that can offer immortal life to those who are naturally mortal, like human beings, and also like the *Cosmic SELF* of this universe to which human beings belong.

It is simply impossible to complete this project without thousands of woes and great pain, as it can be completed only once Ulysses and Penelope have been deeply transformed.

Here the meaning of pain has nothing to do with expiating one's guilt, as it was for Aegisthus. It has to do with being able to go through it time and time again if men and women want to truly transform themselves and then learn the art of creating *secondary beauty*

Penelope is very proud to have more than one hundred suitors that want her, and she brings them into her house rather than keep them at a distance.

After she has seduced them she deceives them with the shroud that she weaves by day and unravels at night. At the same time she creates the alibi for herself of the faithful wife who does not betray her husband.

But the dream of her geese that are killed by an eagle reveals her profound ambiguity and her equally deep attachment to the devouring mother.

*Come on, now, listen to me and explain my dream:
twenty geese are here in the house picking at grain,
while they are coming out of the water, and I am having fun watching them.
A large eagle plunges down from the mountain, its beak open,
and breaks all their necks and kills them; they all lay on their backs
in the house, in a pile; then the eagle flies back up into the luminous sky.
And I was sobbing and crying in the dream,
and my maidservants came to hug me,
because I was so distraught that the eagle had killed my geese.
(Od. XIX, 535-543)*

Penelope must decide to forgive the phallic, devouring mother and only by doing so can she detach from her. This is the only way she can then think up the archery competition and offer Ulysses, who is still disguised as a beggar, the right to participate in it.

*Give him immediately the bow, and let's see.
This is what I tell you to do and it will be done:
if he can string it he can boast Apollo's approval,
and I will clothe him with cape and tunic, beautiful garments,
I'll give him a sharp javelin to defend himself from dogs and men,
and a double-edged sword; and I'll put sandals on his feet
and I'll have him be taken wherever his heart desires".
(Od. XXI, 336-342)*

The extraordinary decision to allow Ulysses to participate in the competition as well, despite the contrary wishes of the Suitors, reveals that Penelope is developing a

new inner position towards the devouring mother and towards her own ambiguity with respect to wanting to grow up and become a woman.

This will give Ulysses the opportunity to begin the massacre of the Suitors that Homer has described as being evil assassins.

Louise Hay says that forgiveness does not mean condoning the other's actions.

It is not easy to understand the difference between forgiving and condoning.

Evil must be fought against and destroyed but with strength, not with hatred. I wrote earlier that this concept is explained very well in the film "Star Wars", when the son Lucas finds he has to fight against his father, Darth Vader, who has allowed himself to be seduced and has passed over to the mother's side.

Here Ulysses and Penelope, on one hand must combat and destroy the perverse will of the mother who wants to seduce and castrate as well as take control of a life that does not belong to her, to threaten it with life or death. On the other, they must stop putting their energies into the homicidal hatred they hold towards the mother, who is a prisoner of her own evil but who is not completely negative.

It is as though the *Odyssey* were divided into three parts. One narrates the voyage of Telemachus who is looking for news about his father or, in other words, is looking for the father and the laws that he represents, beyond the maternal laws; the second narrates the transformational voyage that Ulysses undertakes with the help of Zeus, Athena and Hermes as he wanders around the Mediterranean; the third part narrates the preparation and the execution of the massacre of the Suitors, which is what Ulysses wants but which is what, above all, Zeus and Athena want to happen.

The search for *secondary beauty* must include all three of these steps, each of which is absolutely essential.

The *Personal SELF* and the *Cosmic SELF* guide us and help us to go from one step to the next.

Looking for the father means looking for "the laws of life" (see A. M., *"Le Leggi della vita"* {The Laws of Life}). Looking for the father means looking for a meaning for the life of human beings as part of a cosmic project (see A. M. *The Ulysseans*, Published by the Sophia University of Rome (S.U.R.), 2009 *"La nascita della cosmo-art"*{The Birth of Cosmo-Art}, Published by the Sophia University of Rome (S.U.R.), 2000, and *Theorems and Axioms of Cosmo-Art*, Published by the Sophia University of Rome (S.U.R.), 2009).

Transforming oneself means freeing oneself of hybris, freeing oneself of hatred, of arrogant demands, of envy and greed, which are all natural legacies of the human species, and extracting from within oneself the ability to create oneself anew as an artist of life. Artists of life learn to use the trauma and the pain that life dispenses at every step of the way as supreme creative forces behind the creation of a type of beauty that does not yet exist. The purpose of humanity is to introduce this beauty into the universe, instead of becoming victims of their trauma and pain.

The destruction of the Suitors symbolizes the destruction of evil within us, the destruction of the homicidal and suicidal urges with which we would like to dominate both our own lives and the lives of others.

Evil is always present within us and it is always a lot bigger than that which is outside of us. We will never be able to completely conquer the evil outside ourselves, if we don't first eliminate that which is within us.

CHAPTER XLV

CHARYBDIS AND THE FIG AS THE WORLD'S AXIS

*... All night I was dragged along, and as the sun rose
I reached Scylla's Cliff and the atrocious Charybdis.
Noisily it swallowed the sea's salty water;
but I jumped toward the tall fig
and there I grabbed on, like a bat, because I could not
either plant my feet somewhere, nor could I climb up to the top:
the roots were far down and the branches high up,
long and thick, shadowing Charybdis.
So without losing hold, I stayed there, until it vomited out
the mast and keel; I took a deep breath, and finally they came out
again; at the time when those who judge many litigations
finally goes home to dinner (Od. XII, 429-440).*

Circe is the first to speak of the fig tree when she instructs Ulysses on how to face the perils that still await him.

*Odysseus, you'll see the other cliff lower down,
one next to the other, from one you can shoot your arrow to the other.
And on that one there is a great fig, thick with leaves:
below it glorious Charybdis drinks up the angry waters.
Three times a day it vomits it up and three more it drinks it again
in a terrible way. Ah, that you may not be there when it drinks!
Not even the Enosichthon could save you from ruin.
Keep your ship instead near the cliff of Scylla sailing quickly
get your ship past, because it is much better
to cry for six men aboard than for everyone".
(Od. XII, 101-110)*

Concerning the fig tree, I would like to share these words that in some way allow for a comparison between the wisdom of Ulysses and the wisdom of Buddha.

"It is said that Buddha sat in contemplation under a large tree, the Bodhi tree (that means illumination in Sanskrit) and that is where he reached the highest stage of Samadhi, in which the mind is Awakened and Enlightened. In reality, Buddha sat under a fig tree, the tree of history, the oldest tree in the world. The fig is undoubtedly an image that alludes to the cosmic tree: it is hollow inside and its roots and branches

reach out in all directions. It is a tree that symbolizes the axis of the world, the central and most basic point in all creation.

So Buddha understood that the absolute and the relative go hand in hand, that with death everything returns to again become part of emptiness, an intelligent emptiness, an emptiness that is aware and is capable of maintaining consciousness intact”.

(Quote taken from the Travel Diary of A. Carella’s school of Yoga, from the lesson of February 16th, 2005).

I want to look at some of these statements:

“the fig is an image that alludes to the cosmic tree”,

“a tree that symbolizes the axis of the world, the central and most basic point in all creation”, “the central and most basic point”.

Buddha reaches the highest level of enlightenment under the fig tree and enlightenment for Buddha is salvation from the illusion caused by the veil of Maya. It is as if Maya, and the illusion it generates, were the greatest devouring mother possible, a cosmic undertow that brings humanity pain and ignorance.

While I am highlighting the correspondence between the fig mentioned by Homer and the fig that Buddha talks about, I would also like to point out the profound difference between Homer’s and Buddha’s cosmic visions.

Buddha does not tell us why the cosmos exists, whether or not it is shrouded in the illusion of Maya; nor does he tell us why human beings exist and what the purpose of their presence in the cosmos is.

Homer instead affirms, and Cosmo-Art along with him, that Ulysses exists and suffers so he can create the immortal beauty that becomes possible when there is *concordance* between an *I* and a *You*, as well as *concordance* between the *I* and the *Personal SELF* and the *Cosmic SELF*. This *concordance* is the result of thousands of trials and thousands of transformations.

The project of creating this type of beauty is embraced not only by Ulysses, but also by the whole Cosmos. We understand this by how Zeus and Athena pay so much attention to Ulysses’ voyage and how they follow him so carefully, every step of the way.

Why do they do this?

Menelaus also ends up wandering throughout the Mediterranean, but he does not have Zeus and Athena beside him like Ulysses does.

Ulysses is assigned a special goal.

The goal entrusted to Ulysses is a Cosmic one, and the existence of the Cosmos is a product of Life. Life is eternal but not immortal. To be able to become both eternal and immortal it needs *secondary beauty*, the only type of beauty that is immortal and that makes anyone who creates it immortal as well.

(see A.M. Theorems and Axioms of Cosmo-Art, Published by Sophia University of Rome, (S.U.R.), 2009).

If it were not a goal that the Cosmos wants to reach together with the artistic, creative human forces of Ulysses and Penelope, the constant presence of the gods beside Ulysses would make no sense. Nor would Ulysses' life make any sense, his long journey and his thousands of woes.

Buddha wants to eliminate pain, while Homer says that only with pain and art can the highest form of beauty and the highest form of wisdom be created. This beauty and wisdom is what both humans and the whole Cosmos need to create immortal life, a type of immortal beauty that can travel forever, even when the person who created it is no longer alive.

The human body may disappear when it dies and the physical body of the Universe may die in a Big Crunch, but the living beauty that has been created before every physical form disappears will never disappear once it has been created.

Secondary beauty becomes an eternal, immortal living being; it becomes a very special type of energy field that never dissipates, as instead the stars and the universe that contains them do.

If Ulysses can save his physical form with the help of a fig tree, this is so he can continue to journey and complete his own *transformation* and then become a role model that others can follow.

If the fig tree is the "central and most basic point in all creation" and it is the world's axis, this is the axis where all the human and divine energies converge so Ulysses can use them and create immortal beauty, *secondary beauty*.

This axis of the world must necessarily have something to do with the *Cosmic SELF*, the term with which I indicate the supreme intelligence that governs the particular living organism that is our own universe.

The ability to establish a profound communication between the *I Person*, the profound intelligence that governs the living organism that is our body, and the *Cosmic SELF*, is a task that can take a lifetime to accomplish.

In Western culture little is mentioned about the connection that must be made between the *I Person* and the *Cosmic SELF*.

In the Hindu culture this connection is considered to be very important and the opening of the Chakras has this specific purpose.

In the Aboriginal culture in Australia, this connection was considered paramount in guiding the life of the individual and of the group.

Marlo Morgan speaks extensively of this in her important book "Mutant Message Down Under", which was a bestseller for many years.

Homer most certainly speaks of this beginning in the very first verses of the *Odyssey*, when he mentions the wise council that Zeus sends to mortals.

He also speaks of it every time that Athena goes to Zeus to ask him to intervene in Ulysses' favor. Athena, who represents the inner wisdom found in the *Personal SELF*, is not completely autonomous. She must operate together with Zeus' will.

Here we can also say that Homer speaks of this when Ulysses is about to be sucked in by Charybdis.

Scylla is a monster that was created by mythological fantasy connected to a real experience, whereas Charybdis is a reality, just as the swirling currents that even today are created at the very tip of the Strait of Messina are a reality. Even in modern times those ships that do not pay attention to them can end up running aground on the shores of Sicily, and I can still well remember seeing, when I was a child, a transatlantic that had run aground and could not get free.

Ulysses that grabs on the fig tree seems to talk about Ulysses who is centering himself on the *Cosmic SELF*, so he can defend himself from being pulled under by the great devouring mother that is the atrocious reality of this world.

I wonder, how could there have been a tall fig tree that Ulysses could have grabbed on to, since the shores of Sicily off Scylla are low and flat?

I am more convinced by the idea that Homer uses the fig tree to speak of how Ulysses centers himself on the *Cosmic SELF* in the terrible moment that he is about to be swallowed by Charybdis.

This idea is so much more convincing when we look at yet another detail in Homer's story. Ulysses had already passed by Charybdis without any problems, since he had followed Circe's advice and had steered his ship under the mountain where Scylla was hiding.

But after the storm that Zeus stirs up (according to what Ulysses says), as punishment to his companions who dared eat the oxen that were sacred to the sun god, Ulysses, battered by the currents, is pulled backwards and is forced to pass right by Charybdis. This is not a simple coincidence, nor is it a bitter reflection on life, telling us that we can never escape trouble, whether it be small or large.

It is, instead, a very important lesson on wisdom but one must know how to read it and not just distractedly gloss over it.

We must not let ourselves be sucked down by our pain. The purpose of pain is to create beauty and it is important to learn the art of how to use pain as a cosmic force, and as such as a divine one. But if one allows oneself to be dragged down by pain, it is impossible to become an artist who creates new beauty.

To avoid becoming sucked down by pain I use prayer-reflection, that allows me to center myself on the *Cosmic SELF*. Afterwards I wait, like kids with their cell phones, that it send me a text message, and this almost always happens, either by inner or external means.

The fusion between the *I* and the *Cosmic SELF* is also an important step in creating secondary beauty, as indicated by Cosmo-Art. (see the Laboratory on the film:

“*The Legend of Bagger Vance*” and the article written by Fatma Pitzalis and Luigi Atella, published in A.M. et al “*I Laboratori Corali di Cosmo-art*” {The Cosmo-Art Group Laboratories} , published by Sophia University of Rome, Rome, 2006)

*Below I will share some ideas that describe in more detail the similarities and differences between human beings and the tree from an article I wrote previously:**

“Just as the tree *transforms* energy
(it transforms light energy into chemical energy),
it also *synthesizes* energy
(it makes a synthesis of the energy it takes from the earth with the energy it takes from the sky)
and it also *creates, condenses and transmits* energy
(it produces flowers, fruit and seeds as well as oxygen that keeps the ecosystem alive),
so can human beings, if they wish to, *transform, synthesize, create, condense and transmit* energy.

Human beings in fact do *transform* biochemical energy and mechanical energy in relational, individual and cultural energy;
they *synthesize*, within themselves and outside of themselves, all the energies that exist on earth;
and produce every sort of handicraft
and *create* every type of works, familial, social, cultural,
and in particular those works that we call works of art,
that are *centers of condensed energy*;
energy that then is transmitted and radiated endlessly through time and space.

But while the tree must only follow the laws of nature, and it doesn't have to go through any type of internal conflict or suffering to create, this is not so for human beings.

Humans are reactive beings at birth and the law of *action-reaction* and of *stimulus-response* control them completely. Many remain controlled by these laws for their whole lives, devouring energy and never creating any themselves.

There are those, instead, who want to *become persons*, and they individuate and differentiate themselves from the mass. They manage to break free of the law of action-reaction and to elevate themselves to the *spiritual* dimension which pertains to those who transcend their *reactions* and live following values and virtue, with ideals and projects to build upon.

The reactive being transforms itself and becomes one who *plans* and *creates*.

* This paper was written in 1995 for the opening of the I.A.P.E. – Istituto di Antropologia Personalistica Esistenziale {Institute of Existential Personalistic Anthropology} of the Sophia University of Rome and published as an introduction to the book “*The Ulysseans*”, copyright 2009 Sophia University of Rome .

This is the type of human being that can *transform* and *synthesize* the energy that exists in nature and that is then capable of *creating* a type of energy that *does not exist in nature*.

I would like to call this very special energy the *soul* and I would like to define it as follows:

“The soul is a *field of energy*, both material and non-material at the same time, of freedom, love, truth and beauty, that is created day by day; it condenses and concentrates around a central nucleus, which is the *I* of an individual or the *I* of a populace, because this is the goal that an individual or a populace have set for themselves. They are also willing to give their lives for the realization of this goal”.**

Works of art become masterpieces because they have a soul. And they have a soul because the artists that created them went through a painful and creative process of *materialization* and *dematerialization*. They were capable of giving these works an energy that they did not have before.

Every work of art is a field of energy where material forces and spiritual forces combine together to create a type of life that is superior to natural-biological life, because it is a type of life that is no longer subject to the *law of death and entropy*...

... “We call a *Person* someone who is capable of loving him or herself, of loving another and of being loved, in freedom.

We call someone an *Artist* of their own life and of the life of the Universe those who are capable of making their own life a *work of art* and who, together with others, work to transform a group of people who are complete strangers into a *single living organism*. This living organism is capable of creating truth and beauty, by following the *laws of life*.

Persons who are Artists of their own lives and of the life of the universe can originate a new people: a people who has a soul, *a soul made up of the energy of love and the energy of art*, who know how to face pain and death and transform them into a source of eternal life”...

... “the universe needs this type of beauty so it doesn’t die, and *perhaps human beings are necessary to the universe* to produce this beauty, because only this type of beauty can give the universe a soul that would make it immortal. If there has been a life and there will be death; if there was a Big Bang and there will be a Big Crunch, what difference does it make?

Only one thing is important: that, before the natural course of life and death is completed, the universe has time to create an immortal soul and that it continues to exist, *and with it those who have helped to create it*, beyond the physical spaces of this universe.

** For a better understanding of this definition of the soul see my interpretation of the film “Scent of Woman” in “La nascita della cosmo-art”, {The Birth of Cosmo-Art} published by the Sophia University of Rome, Rome, 2000, pg. 239 and following pages.

Then the universe will not have existed in vain, and all the pain, which fills the lives of human beings, won't have existed in vain either. And it will be discovered that all the art that has been created up to now had a meaning that was still hidden and now can be revealed: to prepare the way so that human beings one day could become artists of their own lives and artists of the life of the universe"

This is what centering one's life on the axis of the world means.

Now I would like to speak about how Charybdis ties into current times. I am convinced that in our present epoch we are on the brink of the death of one civilization, the Western one (see Spengler: "The Decline of the West" and Galimberti: "The Decline of the West" or K. Lorenz: "The Waning of Humaneness"), and of a civilization that is rising from the ruins of the old one.

In the Odyssey, the tale of Charybdis is found right after Ulysses' companions devour the sacred cows and I already spoke of this in chapter XXVIII when I spoke of the *greed* of Ulysses and his companions.

Never before has greed been so prevalent in the whole world: greed for money, greed for power, greed for success, greed for goods, greed for the domination of the stronger over the weaker, and, worst of all, greed for drugs of all types and greed for medications and tranquilizers for every stupid little problem.

I remain absolutely stupified when I see children's rooms full of hundreds of toys and when I see how they stuff themselves with food, with their mothers' complicity.

Charybdis is no longer in the Strait of Messina, it is everywhere, with its voracious mouth ready to swallow everyone.

The World Watch Institute says that we are destroying the planet Earth above any tolerable limit and there seems to be no serious change of direction in who is directing and governing this planet.

This is everyone's problem, it is not just a problem of our governments. We are all contributing to bringing to ruin this pseudo-civilization in which we live, not only in the West but also in the East.

I do not believe that this catastrophe can be averted but it is a good thing that this civilization die and another one be born.

For me this is not a hope but it is a certainty that comes from within.

CHAPTER XLVI

THERE ONCE WAS A MAN WHO WANTED TO FLY

In a world
Where everyone
Sooner or later
Loses everything
There was a man who
Desperately
wanted to fly
From one universe to the next.

He knew what
Wings he needed:
The right wing
Was the acceptance to lose
Everything that he was
In a certain moment
Like his *SELF* told him to;
The left wing,
Was the acceptance to lose
Everything that he had,
Every time the
Messenger appeared on the horizon.

This is what happened when Hermes
The winged god
Appeared in front of Calypso
Who did not want to lose Ulysses,
For seven long years she kept him
And now she let him go.

This is what happened when Ino
Came to Ulysses
And he didn't want to lose his raft
Because the storm was raging around him
Along with the fear of death
Off the island of the Phaeacians.

And the point wasn't
To lose just to lose
Like a gambler loses
But to lose to create.

The point was
The art of losing and the art of losing oneself
For the art of creating.

Creating universes?

No, we already have those.

Creating
Secondary beauty
In a group context
The beauty that does not yet exist
And that once created
Cannot be lost again
Just like the universe
When it expands
Creates space that wasn't there before
And the space created
Cannot be lost.

And just like you cannot fly
From here to there
If there is no space
Between the departure point
And the point of arrival
You cannot fly
From one universe to the next
If you do not know
The art of losing
Everything you are
And everything you have
To create *secondary beauty*.

Without this beauty
You don't have space
And you can't stretch out.

Losing what you can see
Causes a lot of pain
But the messenger
Sometimes asks you to lose even
What you cannot see.
This requires an even greater pain.

You must first make
What is invisible visible.
For example repressed hatred
Or homicidal and suicidal urges.
And you resist this
You want nothing to do with it
And then, when you do know
You lie and say you don't
You lie and say it has nothing to do with you
You lie and say you don't know how to lose them.

But you can't fly like this
You can't create beauty like this
You can't lose death like this
That is following you.
You don't lose and you don't create
And meanwhile you lose yourself
Just like an empty man
Loses himself.

*Life is beautiful, you say,
Why should I create more beauty?*

*I achieved an upright position
Why should I achieve flight?*

The beauty of life
Is here today gone tomorrow.
Even if it lasts forever
Eternity does not last
More than an instant.
One second there is life
One second later
Death comes
And carries away beauty
Any type of beauty
That has not faced death
And transformed it into life.

If you become able to fly
First you have conquered pain and death

And you went through them
And with them you have created
A completely new life and beauty
That did not exist before
And without you
Without your pain
And without your art
They could not have existed.

Not ephemeral life
Nor ephemeral beauty, *primary beauty*,
But immortal life and immortal beauty
That can fly
From one universe to another
Forever
And you with her
For the inexhaustible enjoyment
Of your heart
And of the universe you belong to.

Here I could begin describing how Ulysses acts every time he practices the art of losing everything he is and everything he has, but, to leave my readers with the desire to read the Odyssey again and again, I would like to give them this invitation:

search for yourselves the various ways Ulysses accepts to lose *everything he is and everything he has*, during his long wanderings by land and sea.

I would also like to propose something else. This book is incomplete because of my lack of energy and I could not add all the other ideas and hypotheses that I had in mind; why don't you readers make some of your own *hypotheses* regarding how Ulysses' actions transform himself and others to create *secondary beauty*, doing so in a way that they pertain to Cosmo-Art and your own lives?

The Odyssey is an inexhaustible mine of treasures to be discovered. I will leave to you the task of searching for them and finding them.

There are also the treasures given by the Phaeacians: they are all in the nymphs' cave and Ulysses and Athena have put them there for us.

CHAPTER XLVII

ALCHEMY AND COSMO-ART

Ulysses was an alchemist of life who did not use either stills or magical formulas. He only used the facts of life, pain, wisdom and art.

What kind of art? The art of creating a fusion between pain and wisdom; the art of creating a synthesis of opposites; the art of losing what one is and what one has to become capable of creating a type of beauty that never dies; the art of fusing the truth with love (which is what Oedipus does not know how to do), freedom with cosmic purpose (we all have a personal purpose and cosmic purpose to fulfill); the art of fusing love, truth, freedom and beauty to be created and that will not be created if we do not do so; the art of transforming pain into a source of creativity instead of in victimhood and vindictive hatred; the art of conquering freedom from the devouring, seductive and castrating mother and from the phallic mother assassin; freedom from the poisons that we carry within ourselves as being part of the human species; the art of conquering the truth by breaking the narcissistic shields we were defending ourselves with (and that we continue to defend ourselves with) from pain, when we were not yet strong enough to be able to face it.

Which type of wisdom? The wisdom that comes from the *Personal SELF* and the wisdom that comes from *the Cosmic SELF*, from inside ourselves and from outside ourselves with the help of cosmic coincidences that suddenly show up in the lives of human beings.

Which type of pain? The pain that comes from life's traumas and that strike the *I* from the moment of conception onward. Conscious and unconscious pain that hides in the deepest parts of the human psyche.

The pain of giving up hybris and its poisons, that controls us and makes us proud and arrogant, so we can create a fusion with a *You* and fulfill the purpose of a relationship that can create immortal beauty.

The pain of losing an identity that we are familiar with so we can go towards an unknown identity that frightens it but that most certainly is superior to the previous one.

This is what Homer teaches and this is what Cosmo-Art proposes.

The goal of Ulysses' alchemy was not to transform lead into gold but to transform his various dark parts into luminous ones. In this manner he could hope to

create “*glorious concordance*” as Homer says, or the “*coniunctio oppositorum*” {conjunction of opposites} as the alchemists say.

A star is born because it creates a fusion of equal atoms (thermonuclear reaction) and thus transforms a black cloud into a bright star.

A Cosmo-Art alchemist is able to create a fusion of opposing elements (for example the *fetal I* and the *adult I*, the *I* and the *You*, the *I* and the *SELF*, the *I* and the *Cosmos*, the masculine principle and the feminine principle) and from this fusion it's not a star that emerges, which is mortal, but *secondary beauty* emerges, which is immortal.

The facts of our lives can be completely different from Ulysses', but the steps to be followed are exactly the same.

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I want to thank Silvana Pera that created the CORUS Association, in which she focuses on couples, on group work and on Cosmo-art. She has already published a book entitled "*Diario di Bordo di un gruppo in cammino verso la bellezza seconda con l'aiuto delle Regole della navigazione notturna degli Ulissidi*" {Diary of a group journeying towards secondary beauty with the help of the Ulysseans' Rules of Nocturnal Navigation"}.

I also want to thank Luigi Atella and Fatma Pitzalis, Directors of the Istituto di Antropologia Personalistica Esistenziale {Institute of Existential Personalistic Anthropology} in Tempio Pausania, Italy, and their students as well, who masterfully organized the *Seconde Ulissiadi della S.U.R.* {Second Ulyssean Conference of the Sophia University of Rome}. They were held in Sardinia in July, 2005, where they were a great success, and my book "*Il mito di Ulisse e la bellezza seconda*" {The myth of Ulysses and Secondary Beauty} was presented as well, receiving a warm welcome.

I thank again the staff of the Istituto di Antropologia Esistenziale {The Institute of Existential Anthropology} and its tireless Director, Gabriella Sorgi, who has presented Sophia-Analysis, Sophia-Art and Cosmo-Art, through the fascinating method of Sophiartistic theater-dance, at the international congresses of the World Council of Psychotherapy in Vienna and Moscow. I also thank them for having created training seminars for Russian therapists and for those from the Baltic countries in their Institute. I also want to recall the Third International Congress of the City of Ascoli Piceno, Italy, organized by their Institute on the theme "*Penelope: la trasformazione della vendetta*" {Penelope: the transformation of revenge}, which received quite extensive press coverage.

I owe a special thanks to Ombretta Ciapini, with whom I was able to present at the 1999 Congress of the EAP, European Association for Psychotherapy the paper entitled "*From the Myth of Oedipus to the Myth of Ulysses*", in which I encourage passing from only the search for *knowledge* (Oedipus) to the search for knowledge to create *beauty* (Ulysses).

I also thank her for the great satisfaction she gave me by getting this article printed in English in the book "*Mythos – Traum – Wirklichkeit*", published in 2002 by A. Pritz, President of the W.C.P., World Congress of Psychotherapy, where the best papers from the 1999 Vienna congress were collected. I also thank Martha Bache-Wiig, Director of the Center for the Development of the Person in Waukesha, Wisconsin, USA, who translated that article and many others, as well as this and many other of my books.

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I thank Emanuele Chimienti who, after my book on the Ulysseans was published, changed the name of the Institute he directs in Lecce to “Gli Ulissidi” {The Ulysseans} , giving it a clearer project based on Cosmo-Art.

I thank Enrico Belli, Director of the Institute in Catanzaro, Italy, for the books he has published about my teachings and in particular about *secondary beauty*

I thank Herve’ Etienne in Paris for having obtained in 2005, after a long, important commitment to this project, recognition of Sophia-Analysis as a therapeutic method and of the Paris Institute of Sophia-Analysis (ISAP) as a training school for psychotherapists. I will never be able to thank him enough for this important accomplishment.

I thank Giampiero Ciappina, Director of the Solaris Institute together with his wife Paola Capriani, who has taken care of the Sophia University of Rome website for many years, as well as of the publication of my books on the Internet.

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I thank Anna Agresti and Angela Marchi who, by combining their energies, opened the first school of counseling in Cosmo-Artistic Counseling in 2006, in Prato and in Bologna. I must say something more about Anna Agresti. At a time when she was submerged by profound grief over the death of her daughter Sandra, after I had comforted her for quite some time I asked her to transform her pain into creativity, as Cosmo-Art suggests. She listened to me by creating the Associazione Microcosmo {Microcosmos Association} and the “Premio Cinema e Narrativa” {Cinema and Fiction Award} , for young people who send in a Sophia-Artistic critique of one of four films that are chosen every year. The Award is going forward very successfully and is now in its tenth year. In the Manifest of Cosmo-Art I wrote that pain serves for creating and Anna Agresti gave a practical, visible form to this correct use of pain, by creating a new identity inside of herself and creating an association for young people.

Finally, I want to thank Luigi Atella and Bruno Coniglio who transferred the Odyssey on to a digital format, which made it much easier for me to look for the verses that I needed to illustrate my hypotheses. I also thank Antonio Scarcella, President of the Associazione Galassia {Galaxy Association} in Ugento, who has taken care of the printing and distribution of my books in Italy, with great love and patience, for many years.

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OTHER BOOKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR

AMORE E PERSONA {Love and the Person} *
3° ed. Costellazione d'Arianna, Rome 1993

TEORIA DELLA PERSONA {The Theory of the Person}
2° ed. Costellazione di Arianna, Rome 1992

AMORE LIBERTA' E COLPA {Love, Freedom and Guilt} *
2° ed. Sophia University of Rome (S.U.R.), Rome 2000

LA VIE COMME OEUVRE D'ART {Life as a Work of Art} *
Ed. Sophia University of Rome (S.U.R.), Rome 1988

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Ed. Sophia University of Rome (S.U.R.), Rome 1991

TEORIA DELL'INCONSCIO ESISTENZIALE {The Theory of the Existential Unconscious}
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IL MITO DI ULISSE
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{The Myth of Ulysses and Secondary Beauty} **
Ed. Sophia University of Rome (S.U.R.), Rome 2005

I LABORATORI CORALI DELLA COSMO-ART {The Cosmo-Art Group Laboratories}
Ed. Sophia University of Rome (S.U.R.), Rome 2006

* The books that have one asterisk are in the process of being translated into English.
** Those with two asterisks have already been translated.